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F.D.C.

NO. 5

MARCH

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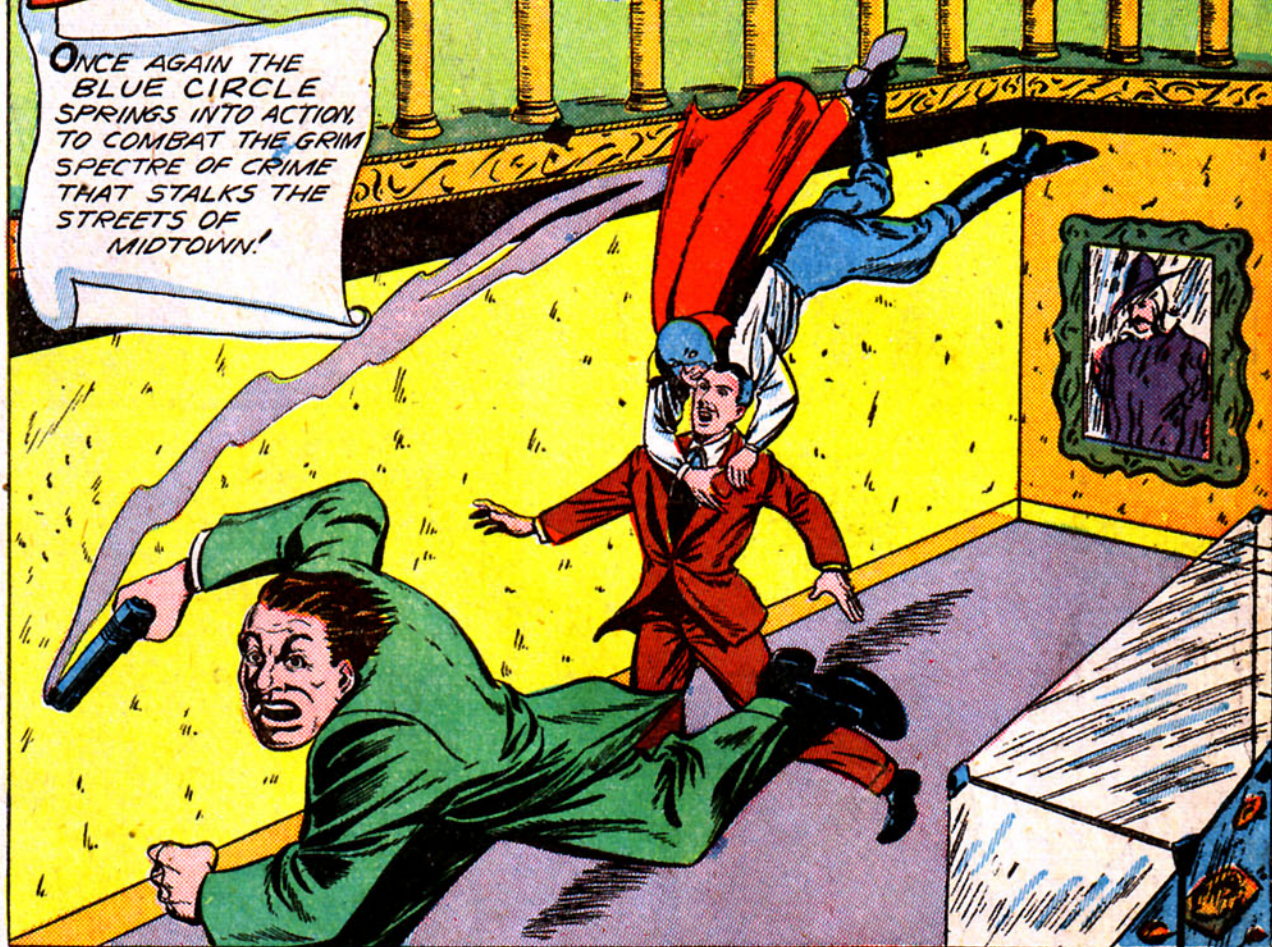
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BLUE CIRCLE

ONCE AGAIN THE BLUE CIRCLE SPRINGS INTO ACTION, TO COMBAT THE GRIM SPECTRE OF CRIME THAT STALKS THE STREETS OF MIDTOWN!



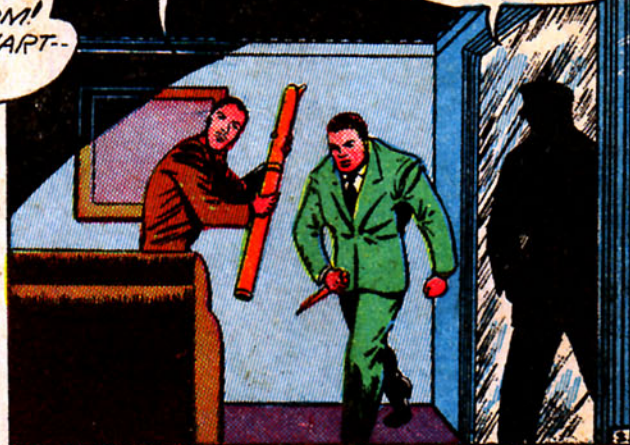
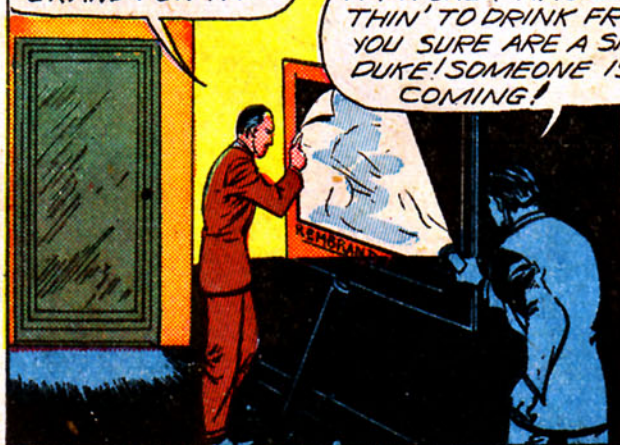
AH, IT IS FINISHED! NOW TO ROLL IT UP CAREFULLY AND PUT IT IN THE CARDBOARD TUBE! WE SHOULD GET ABOUT FIFTY GRAND FOR IT!

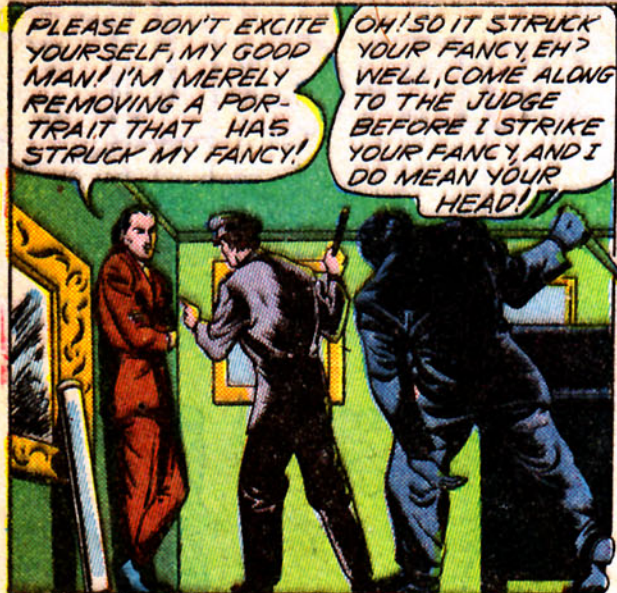
IMAGINE PAYING ALL THAT DOUGH FOR A DAUB OF PAINT! BEFORE I WENT IN THE ART RACKET WITH YOU, I THOUGHT A PICTURE WAS SOMETHIN' TO DRINK FROM! YOU SURE ARE A SMART-DUKE! SOMEONE IS COMING!

THE WATCHMAN! HE HASN'T SEEN US! QUICK! GET BEHIND THAT COUCH! WHEN I GIVE THE SIGNAL--

I GETCHA! YOU'RE TALKIN' MY LANGUAGE NOW!

HEY, IN THERE! WHAT'S GOING ON?





THE NEXT DAY...

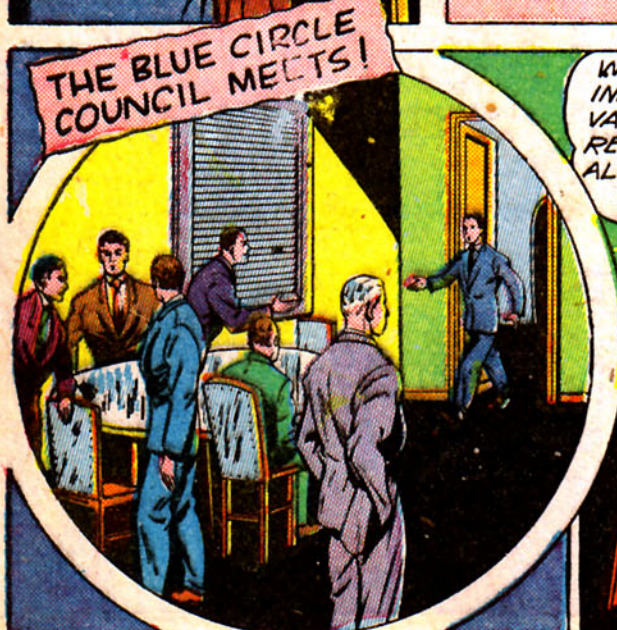
DAILY STAR

11111

PRICELESS REMBRANDT STOLEN FROM MUSEUM! WATCHMAN MURDERED IN MUSEUM THEFT! POLICE SPREAD DRAGNET FOR UNDERWORLD CHARACTERS!



THE THIEVES REMAIN AT LARGE! FINALLY, ON THE THIRD DAY AFTER THE CRIME, SEVEN CITIZENS OF MIDTOWN RECEIVE SEVEN IDENTICAL SLIPS OF BLUE PAPER!



WE'LL SKIP THE PRELIMINARIES TONIGHT! AN INNOCENT MAN HAS BEEN MURDERED, AND A VALUABLE PORTRAIT STOLEN! IT MUST BE RECOVERED AND THE DEATH AVENGED! YOU'VE ALL SPECIALIZED IN VARIOUS FIELDS OF CRIME! YOU'VE BEEN PARDONED TO HELP ME STAMP IT OUT!



WE'VE DONE A GOOD JOB--SO FAR! WE MUST ACT AGAIN! SAUNDERS! YOU SPECIALIZED IN JOBS OF THIS KIND! ANY LEADS?

YEAH! SMELLS LIKE DUKE RYDER, A SMOOTH WORKER WITH HIGH CLASS CONTACTS! CLEVER, BUT WITH A PERSONALITY LIKE A RATTLE-SNAKE!

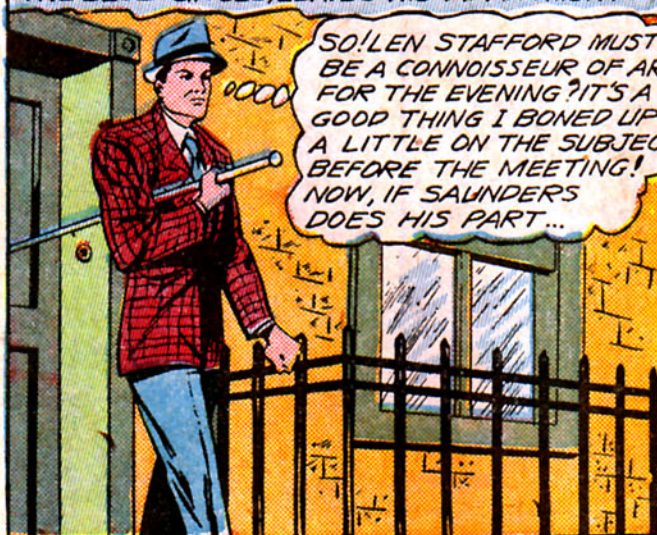
GOOD! ANY IDEA WHERE HE MIGHT BE FOUND?

SURE! HE HAS AN ART SHOP IN THE VILLAGE! USES IT AS A FRONT TO DISPOSE OF HIS LOOT! BUT HE'S SMART! THE COPS HAVE NEVER HUNG A RAP ON HIM!

MAYBE NOT, BUT WE'RE GOING TO HANG A ROPE ON HIM! ALL MEMBERS EXCEPT SAUNDERS ARE EXCUSED FOR THE EVENING! SAUNDERS, THIS IS WHAT I WANT YOU TO DO--



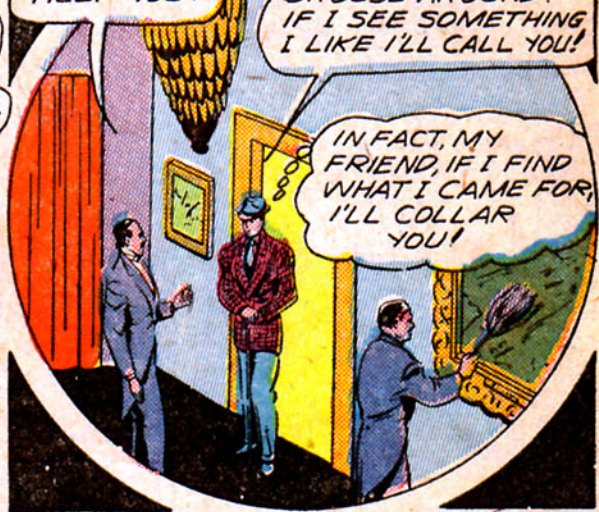
SOME MINUTES LATER LEN STAFFORD, ALIAS THE BLUE CIRCLE, LEAVES HIS APARTMENT.



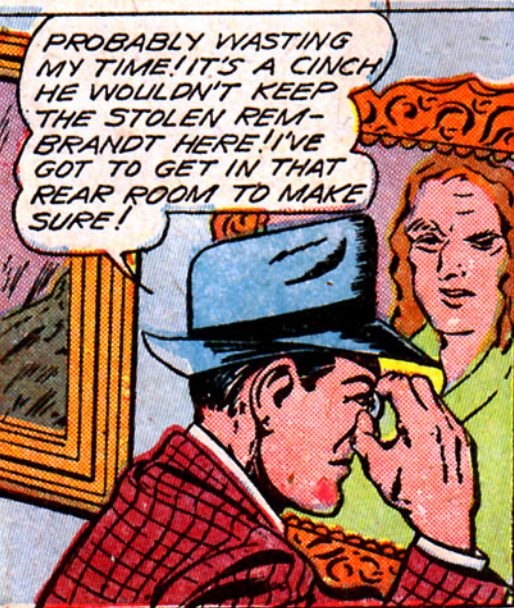
SO! LEN STAFFORD MUST BE A CONNOISSEUR OF ART FOR THE EVENING? IT'S A GOOD THING I BONED UP A LITTLE ON THE SUBJECT BEFORE THE MEETING! NOW, IF SAUNDERS DOES HIS PART...

GOOD EVENING, SIR! MAY I HELP YOU?

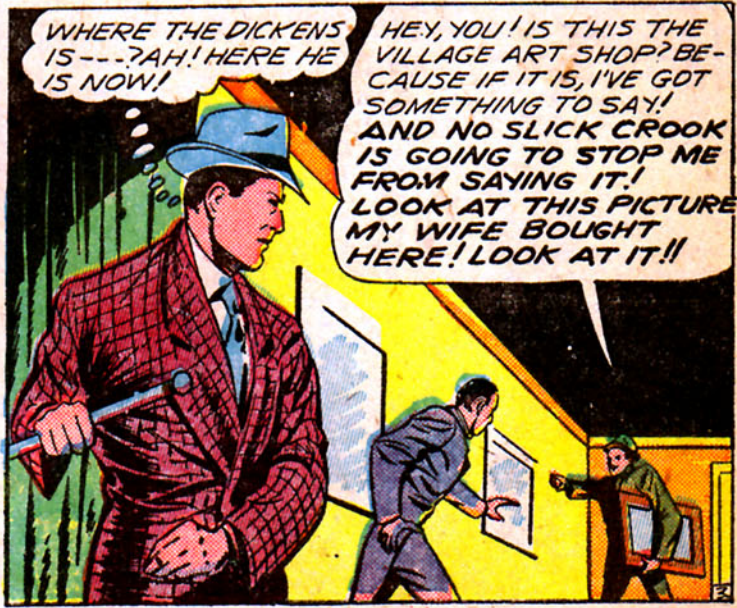
NO THANK YOU! I JUST CAME IN TO BROWSE AROUND! IF I SEE SOMETHING I LIKE I'LL CALL YOU!



IN FACT, MY FRIEND, IF I FIND WHAT I CAME FOR, I'LL COLLAR YOU!



PROBABLY WASTING MY TIME! IT'S A CINCH HE WOULDN'T KEEP THE STOLEN REMBRANDT HERE. I'VE GOT TO GET IN THAT REAR ROOM TO MAKE SURE!



WHERE THE DICKENS IS---? AH! HERE HE IS NOW!

HEY, YOU! IS THIS THE VILLAGE ART SHOP? BECAUSE IF IT IS, I'VE GOT SOMETHING TO SAY! AND NO SLICK CROOK IS GOING TO STOP ME FROM SAYING IT! LOOK AT THIS PICTURE MY WIFE BOUGHT HERE! LOOK AT IT!!

LEN, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE RUMPUSS SAUNDERS HAS CREATED, SLIPS INTO THE REAR ROOM THROUGH THE DOOR!

IF I DON'T GET MY MONEY BACK, I'LL SMASH THE WHOLE PLACE!

GOOD BOY, SAUNDERS! HE'LL KEEP THEM BUSY AWHILE! NOW FOR THAT REMBRANDT! WHERE WOULD THEY KEEP IT? WHERE?

ROCKY! THROW THIS CLOWN OUT ON HIS EAR!

OH! THE PARTY'S BREAKING UP! I'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE! I'LL JUST SHOVE THIS PORTRAIT BACK IN PLACE---

BUT, IN HIS DESIRE TO EVADE DISCOVERY, HE FAILS TO SECURE THE PORTRAIT WHICH TOTTERS ON THE SHELF AND FALLS TO THE FLOOR!

AND STAY OUT!

IT SOUNDS AS IF SAUNDERS GOT THE BUM'S RUSH! IT'S TIME I MADE MY EXIT TOO!

LEAVING THE SHOP, LEN MEETS SAUNDERS IN A VACANT DOORWAY...

NOTHING, EH? MAYBE IT'S AT THEIR APARTMENT! ADDRESS IS 380 MADISON STREET!

A LITTLE BURGLARY WILL BE NECESSARY! I THINK IT'S TIME FOR BLUE CIRCLE TO TAKE A HAND!

MINUTES LATER, ON THE FIRE ESCAPE OF A SWANKY MADISON STREET APARTMENT--

HMMM! NEAT, THOUGH NOISY! THERE'S NO TIME TO KNOCK! ESPECIALLY SINCE MY ARTY FRIENDS WILL SOON CLOSE UP SHOP!

WHILE BACK AT THE ART SHOP THAT VERY MOMENT.

DAT'S FUNNY! HEY, DUKE! DAT GUY THAT WAS BROWSN' AROUN' MUST'A BEEN SNOOPIN' IN THE BACK ROOM! DERE'S A PITCHUR ON THE FLOOR THAT WUZN'T HERE WHEN I SEEN IT LAST!

YOU SURE? WAIT A BIT--! THAT DRUNK BUSTING IN HERE WAS A PHONEY! I'LL BET IT WAS ALL ARRANGED! COME ON! WE'RE GOING HOME, I'VE A HUNCH SOMETHING'S ROTTEN!

IN THE THIEVES APARTMENT, BLUE CIRCLE, HAVING MADE A THOROUGH BUT FRUITLESS SEARCH, RETURNS TO THE LIVING ROOM!

THERE'S NO PORTRAIT HERE! I WONDER--HMM! A SPECIAL DELIVERY LETTER FOR DUKE! I THINK I'LL GLANCE OVER IT!

MRS. CRYDER
R.F.D. #2
REEDVILLE, N.Y.
SPECIAL DELIVERY

GLANCING OVER THE CONTENTS OF THE LETTER, BLUE CIRCLE'S EYE CATCHES A PECULIARLY WORDED SENTENCE--

And your letter, which we received yesterday, gives us a complete picture of your fine position.

YESTERDAY? ACCORDING TO THE POSTMARK THAT WAS THE DAY AFTER THE ROBBERY! AND WHY IS "PICTURE" UNDERLINED? I GET IT! RYDER SENT THAT PORTRAIT TO HIS FOLKS AND THIS IS THEIR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT!

Mother

WHILE BLUE CIRCLE IS DEEP IN THOUGHT IN THE APARTMENT, OUTSIDE IN THE HALL---

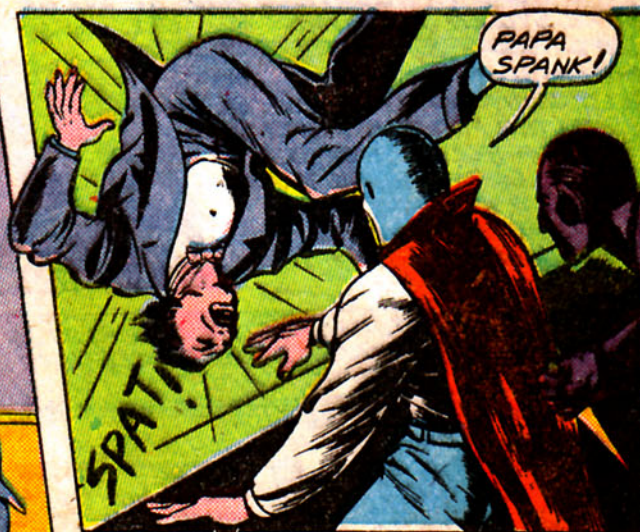
YOUR HUNCH WAS GOOD! SOMEONE IS IN THE-- HEY, IT'S BLUE CIRCLE!

WE'LL GET HIM! YOU TAKE HIM FROM BEHIND AND PIN HIS ARMS DOWN! I'LL DO THE REST!

THOUGH CAUGHT UNAWARES, BLUE CIRCLE IS MORE THAN CAPABLE OF MEETING THE SNEAK ATTACK!

SNOOPER, EH? NOW YOU--? AWK!

I THINK SNEAK ATTACKS SHOW A LACK OF MANNERS! SO--

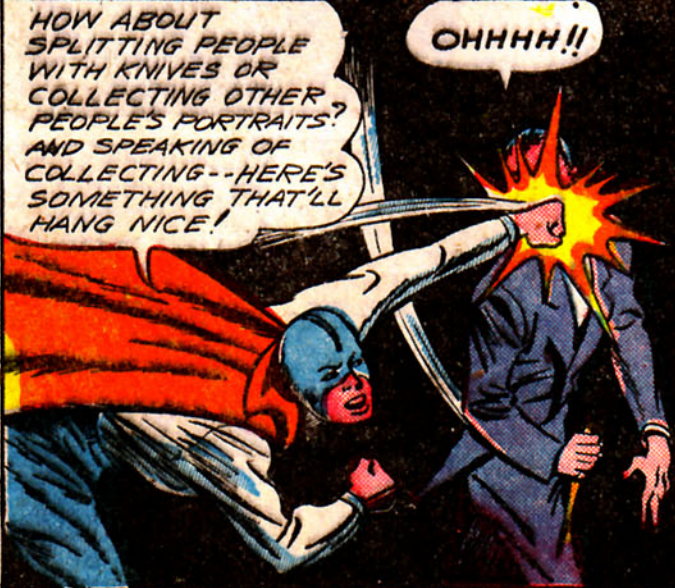


HOW ABOUT SPLITTING PEOPLE WITH KNIVES OR COLLECTING OTHER PEOPLE'S PORTRAITS? AND SPEAKING OF COLLECTING--HERE'S SOMETHING THAT'LL HANG NICE!

OHHHH!!

HIS OPPONENTS SAFELY OUT OF THE FIGHT---

OUT LIKE A LIGHT! HMM! THIS PAPER KNIFE IS YOURS DUKE! THE ONLY THING I'LL KEEP IS THE LETTER! YOUR FOLKS MIGHT LIKE TO EXPLAIN A FEW THINGS! SO-LONG, DUKE, I'LL SEE YOU IN THE CHAIR!



**BUT, DUKE IS PLAYING POSSUM
AND AS BLUE CIRCLE LEAVES--**

SMART GUY, EH? BUT
NOT SMART ENOUGH
FOR DUKE RYDER! YOU
LEFT YOUR FINGERPRINTS
ON THAT KNIFE AND THEY'RE
GOING TO SEND YOU RIGHT
TO THE HOT-SEAT!



**WHILE UNAWARE OF THE FRAME-
WORK BEING BUILT AROUND
HIM, BLUE CIRCLE BURNS UP
THE ROAD TO REEDVILLE AND
THE STOLEN REMBRANDT!!!**

**FLASH--POLICE ARE ON THE
LOOKOUT FOR BLUE CIRCLE,
WANTED FOR THE KNIFE SLAY-
ING OF ROCKY DRUE, SMALL
TIME CRIMINAL! HE WAS
FOUND DEAD IN HIS
APARTMENT A FEW
MINUTES --B-BLAH-BLAH-
BLAH-BLAAA--**

**BACK IN MIDTOWN, RYDER COMPLETES
HIS PLAN TO FRAME BLUE CIRCLE INTO
THE ELECTRIC CHAIR!!!**

AND THE DRAGNET
IS OUT! POLICE BE-
LIEVE BLUE CIRCLE
TO BE STILL IN
MIDTOWN AND HIS
CAPTURE IMMINENT!

NUTS! BLUE
CIRCLE'S MILES
FROM HERE BY
NOW! LET'S SEE--!
HE'LL TRY TO FIND
THE PORTRAIT! IT'S
THE ONLY THING THAT
WILL CLEAR HIM! THAT
MEANS I HIT FOR
REEDVILLE!



**MUCH LATER IN A TELEPHONE BOOTH
IN A REEDVILLE DRUG STORE!**

CAPTAIN GRATH,
STATE POLICE?
BARRACK'S
SPEAKING!

I'VE GOT A
TIP THAT BLUE
CIRCLE IS HEAD-
ING FOR THE RYDER
FARM ON THE LAKE
ROAD! IF YOU WANT
HIM GO OUT THERE!



**WRAPPING THE HILT OF THE PAPER-KNIFE IN A
HANDKERCHIEF, DUKE CRAWLS TOWARD HIS
UNCONSCIOUS PARTNER!**

THE FUNNY PART
OF THE FRAME-
UP IS, YOU'RE
GOING TO SEND
HIM THERE,
ROCKY! I HATE
TO DO THIS PAL,
BUT BETTER
YOU THAN ME!
SO-LONG--
ROCKY!!!

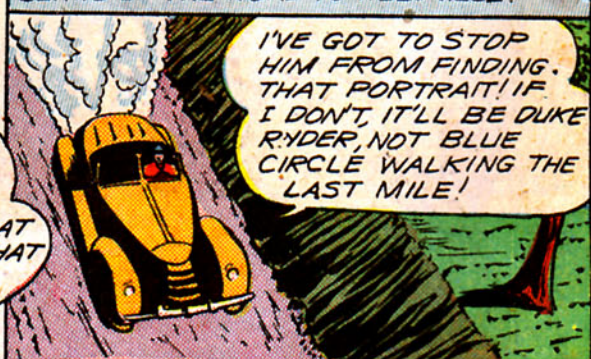
OOH!



MIGHT AS
WELL HAVE
MUSIC!
LET'S SEE--!
IT'S TWENTY
MILES TO--?
WHAT TH--?

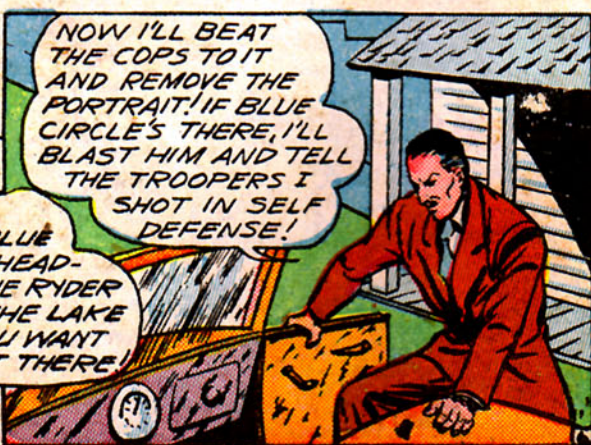
MURDER?? BUT, WHA--?
DUKE RYDER! HE KILLED
ROCKY AND FRAMED ME
WITH THE KNIFE I
HANDLED! THE ONLY WAY
TO PROVE I DIDN'T GO TO
THAT APARTMENT TO KILL
IS TO FIND THAT PORTRAIT!

**A MOMENT LATER, A SECOND CAR
BURNS UP THE ROAD TO REEDVILLE!**



I'VE GOT TO STOP
HIM FROM FINDING
THAT PORTRAIT! IF
I DON'T, IT'LL BE DUKE
RYDER, NOT BLUE
CIRCLE WALKING THE
LAST MILE!

NOW I'LL BEAT
THE COPS TO IT
AND REMOVE THE
PORTRAIT! IF BLUE
CIRCLE'S THERE, I'LL
BLAST HIM AND TELL
THE TROOPERS I
SHOT IN SELF
DEFENSE!

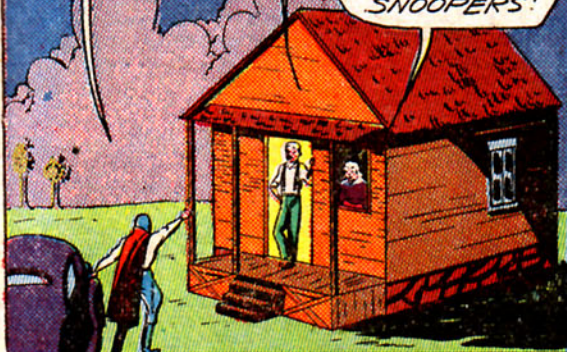


AT THE SAME MOMENT, BLUE CIRCLE

HELLO, FRIEND!
YOU MISTER
RYDER?

WHAT'S IT
TO YOU?

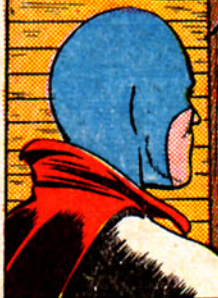
SEND
HIM AWAY,
PA! WE
AIN'T BUYING
NOTHING! WE
DON'T LIKE
SNOOPERS!



HMM! NOT VERY
HOSPITABLE! I
WONDER WHY?

WE AIN'T GOT
NOTHIN' HERE! WE'RE
POOR, HONEST
PEOPLE WHO WANT
TO BE LEFT ALONE!
DON'T LET HIM IN, PA!

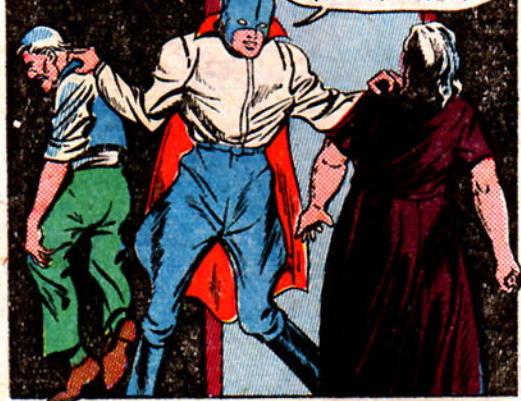
SORRY, MOTHER,
I'VE REASON TO
BELIEVE YOU'RE
HIDING SOMETHING
A LOT OF PEOPLE
ARE LOOKING FOR!



AND WHILE BLUE CIRCLE
SEARCHES THE HOUSE, THE
OLD COUPLE DROP THEIR
ASSUMED INNOCENCE!

YOU HEARD MY
WIFE, MISTER! NOW
GIT' WHA?? TAKE
YOUR HANDS
OFF ME!

SORRY, FRIEND,
BUT I'M TAKING
A LOOK AROUND!
YOU SEEM A
LITTLE TOO
ANXIOUS TO GET
RID OF ME!



BLUE CIRCLE BRUSHES
PAST THE OLD COUPLE
INTO THE HOUSE!

HMM! NOT VERY
MUCH OF A PLACE!
THE ONLY PICTURE
HERE IS THAT ONE
OVER THE COUCH!
WHEW! IF REMBRANDT
COULD ONLY SEE
THAT! WELL, I'LL
TRY THE BEDROOM!



YOU OLD FOOL!
WHY DIDN'T YOU
KEEP HIM OUT.
IF HE FINDS THAT
PORTRAIT DUKE
SENT US, OUR
GOOSE WILL
BE COOKED!

DON'T
WORRY! HE
WON'T
FIND IT
IN A MIL-
-- WHA??

PSSST!
PA!"



DUKE! BLUE
CIRCLE IS--

I KNOW! I FOLLOWED
HIM HERE AND THIS IS
WHERE HE'S STAYING!
GRAB YOUR SHOT GUN,
PA! WE GOT US SOME
KILLING TO DO!



BUT, BLUE CIRCLE HAS WITNESSED THE
REUNION AND OVERHEARS THE PLOT!

HOW TOUCHING! SO,
YOU'VE GOT SOME
KILLING TO DO? WELL,
I'LL HAVE SOMETHING
TO SAY ABOUT THAT!



AND AS THE MURDEROUS DUO CREEP SILENTLY UP TO THE BEDROOM DOOR THE HUNTED SUDDENLY TURNS INTO THE HUNTER!

LOOKING FOR SOME-ONE, DUKE?

BLUE CIRCLE! GET HIM, PA!



BUT AS THE OLDER THUG POINTS HIS SHOT-GUN AT BLUE CIRCLE'S BACK AND PULLS THE TRIGGER, BLUE CIRCLE WHIRLS DUKE AROUND AND ---

NO, YOU DON'T!

AHHHH!



A VINDICTIVE AND TRIUMPHANT LOOK FLASHES ACROSS THE EYES OF THE DYING GANGSTER, THEY LOOK PAST BLUE CIRCLE'S SHOULDER, REST BRIEFLY ON A SPOT OVER THE COUCH, THEN DIM OUT TO LOOK INTO ETERNITY!

HE'S DEAD!

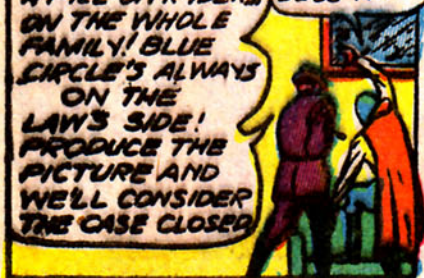
I WONDER WHAT THAT DYING LOOK MEANT? HE WAS LOOKING OVER THE COUCH, GLOATING 'HOLEY MOLEY! COULD IT BE --



STEPPING OVER TO THE COUCH...

IT MAKES SENSE! WE HAVE A FILE ON RYDER... ON THE WHOLE FAMILY! BLUE CIRCLE'S ALWAYS ON THE LAW'S SIDE! PRODUCE THE PICTURE AND WE'LL CONSIDER THE CASE CLOSED!

YOU BET I CAN PRODUCE IT!



BLUE CIRCLE RIPS THE PICTURE OFF THE WALL AND FLIPS IT OVER, REVEALING THE REMBRANDT...



WELL, RYDER! YOU SAVED THE STATE AN ELECTRIC BILL! HERE, I'LL TAKE THAT GUN! DUKE, YOU'RE GOING OUT! WHY DON'T YOU GIVE UP THAT PORTRAIT AND GO OUT CLEAN!

NOT-- A CHANCE, SUCKER! WITHOUT THAT PORTRAIT YOU HANG'IN THAT CASE, (COUGH-COUGH) WE'LL-- MEET AGAIN-- YOU'LL NEVER-- FIND IT! NEVER! SO LONG, -- SUCKER.. OHHHH...

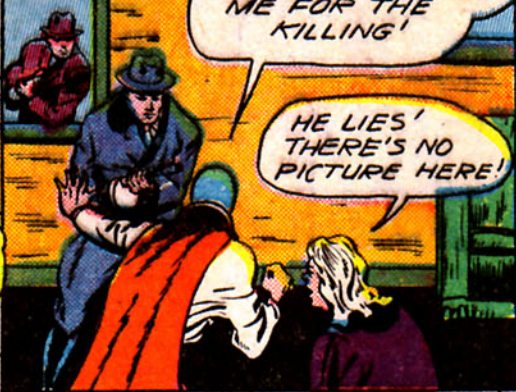


BUT AS BLUE CIRCLE TAKES A STEP TOWARD THE COUCH---

REACH! WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED!

WAIT, TROOPER! YOU'VE GOT THE WRONG MAN! THERE'S YOUR KILLER! HE STOLE THE REMBRANDT, KILLED THE WATCHMAN, THEN HIS PARTNER! HE FRAMED ME FOR THE KILLING!

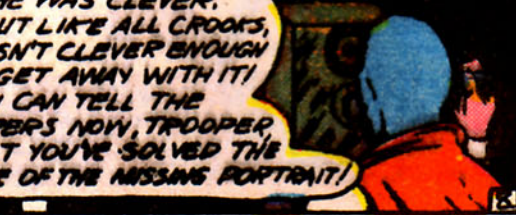
HE LIES! THERE'S NO PICTURE HERE!



LATER, BLUE CIRCLE REPORTS TO THE COUNCIL BY PHONE!

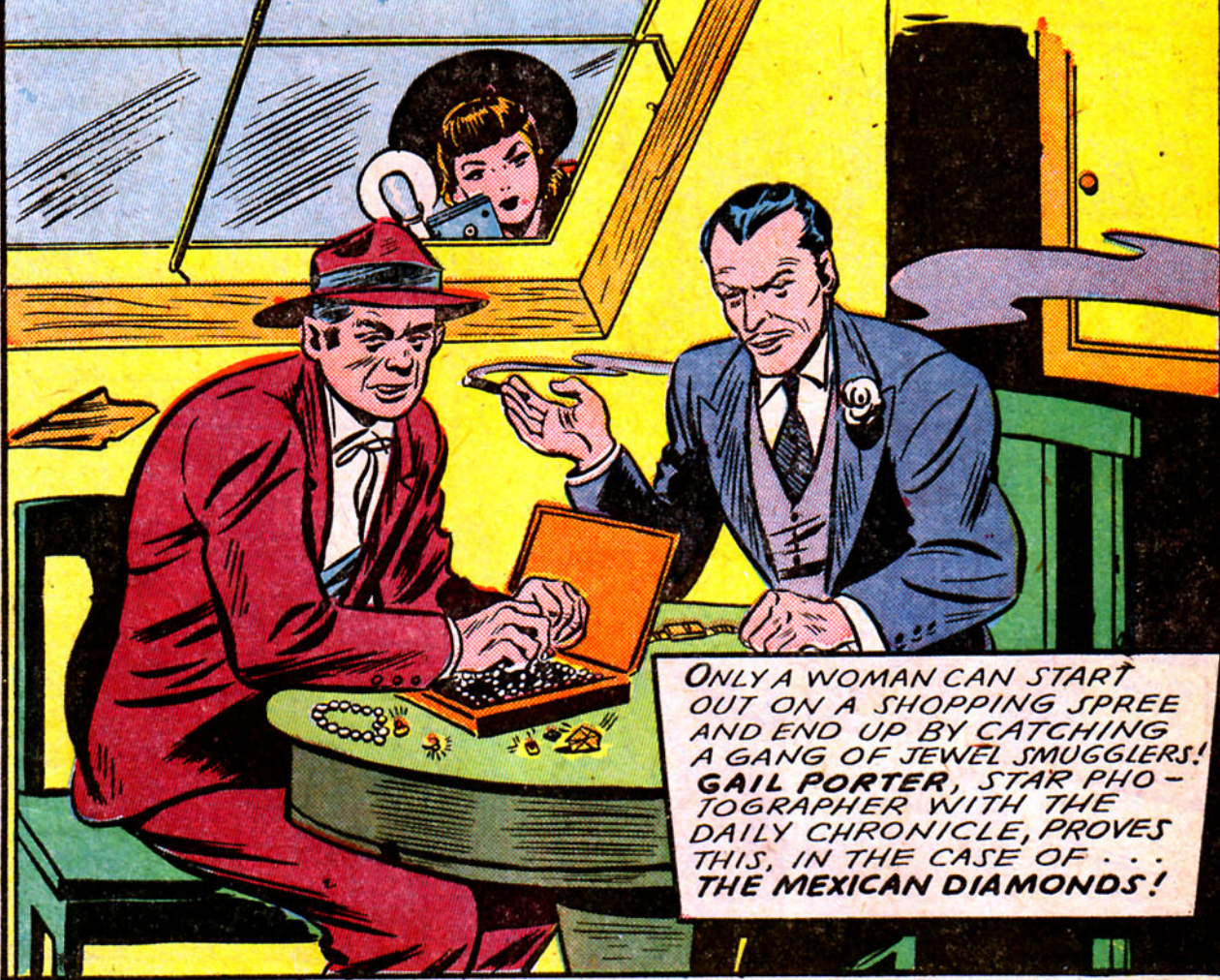
HELLO, SAUNDERS? THANKS TO YOUR HELP, ROCK AND DUKE HAVE PAID FOR THEIR CRIME AND DUKE'S PARENTS ARE BEHIND BARS!

LOOK! THE BOWL OF FRUIT WAS PAINTED ON THE OTHER SIDE! HE WAS CLEVER, BUT LIKE ALL CROOKS, WASN'T CLEVER ENOUGH TO GET AWAY WITH IT! YOU CAN TELL THE PAPERS NOW, TROOPER THAT YOU'VE SOLVED THE CASE OF THE MISSING PORTRAIT!



Gail Porter

GIRL PHOTOGRAPHER



ONLY A WOMAN CAN START OUT ON A SHOPPING SPREE AND END UP BY CATCHING A GANG OF JEWEL SMUGGLERS! **GAIL PORTER**, STAR PHOTOGRAPHER WITH THE DAILY CHRONICLE, PROVES THIS, IN THE CASE OF . . . **THE MEXICAN DIAMONDS!**

IN A FIFTH AVENUE DRESS-SHOP. GAIL PORTER, STAR PHOTOGRAPHER FOR THE DAILY CHRONICLE, TAKES TIME OUT TO DO SOME SHOPPING!



ALL RIGHT, MISS! I'LL TAKE THIS ONE!

ALL I NEED NOW IS A NICE PIECE OF COSTUME JEWELRY!

AND A FEW MINUTES LATER, IN A SMALL COSTUME JEWELRY SHOP...



MAY I SEE THIS PIECE, PLEASE?

OF COURSE MADAM! I...? AH, YOU WILL EXCUSE ME, PLEASE?

AH, MANUEL MY FRIEND! I HAVE THE DIAMONDS!

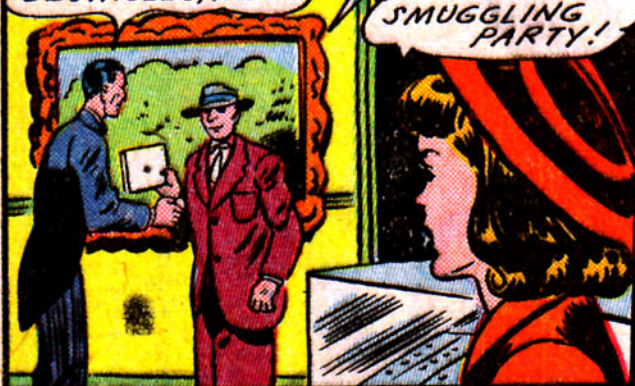
TINKLE, TINKLE

THE LIQUID SPANISH AROUSES GAIL'S INTEREST, AND AS THE CLERK LEAVES TO GREET THE NEWCOMER - -

GOOD! THE CUSTOM OFFICIALS PRESENTED NO OBSTACLES, THEN?

OBSTACLES? BAH! THEY SUSPECTED NOTHING!

CUSTOM OFFICIALS? DIAMONDS? SOUNDS LIKE A SMUGGLING PARTY!

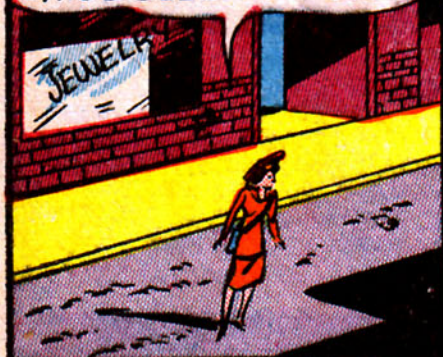


THERE MAY BE A STORY IN THIS! THERE! NOW, I'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE THEY GET SUSPICIOUS! OH, CLERK!



PURCHASING A SMALL PIECE OF JEWELRY, GAIL HURRIES FROM THE SHOP - -

I SHOULD REPORT THIS TO THE POLICE! BUT I HAVE NO PROOF THE PACKAGE CONTAINS SMUGGLED JEWELS!



SHE PARKS HERSELF IN A CONVENIENT DOORWAY.

NO! I'LL WAIT FOR THE LITTLE MAN TO COME OUT, THEN FOLLOW HIM!



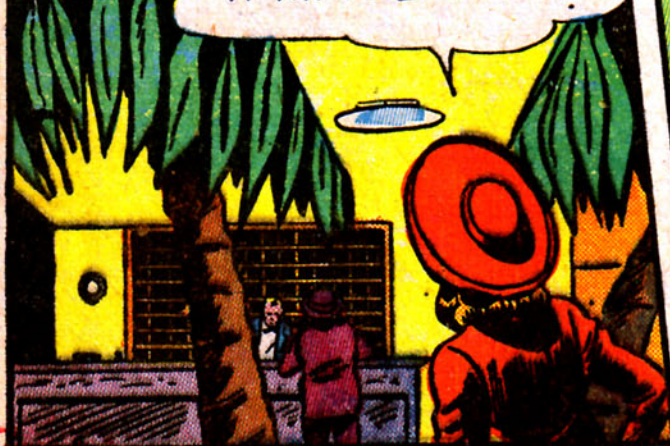
SUDDENLY - - -

AH, THERE HE IS! NOW, MR. SMUGGLER! LET'S SEE WHERE YOU HANG YOUR HAT!



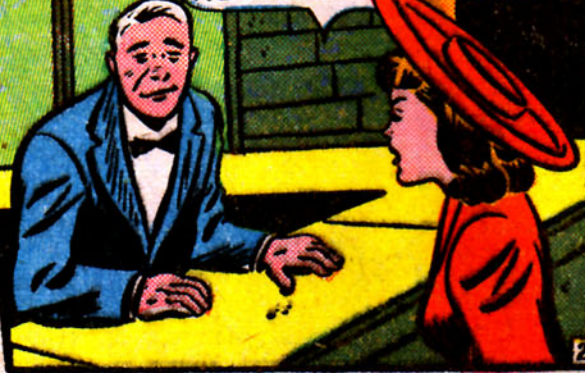
GAIL TAILS THE MAN TO A SMALL WEST SIDE HOTEL - - -

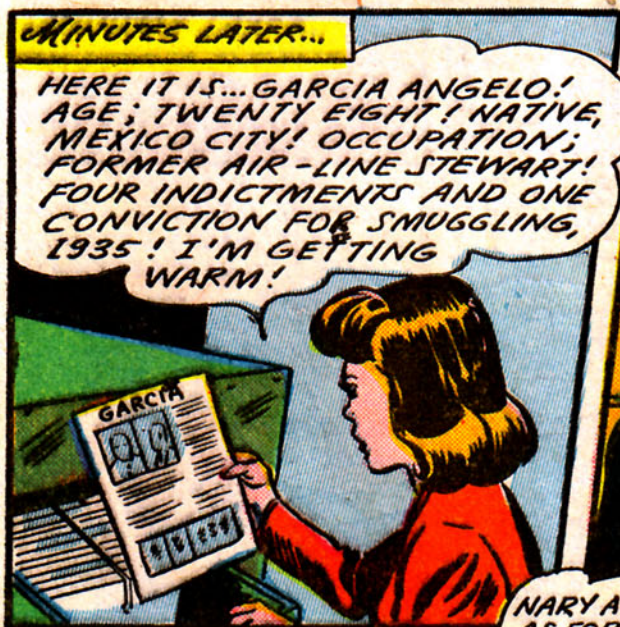
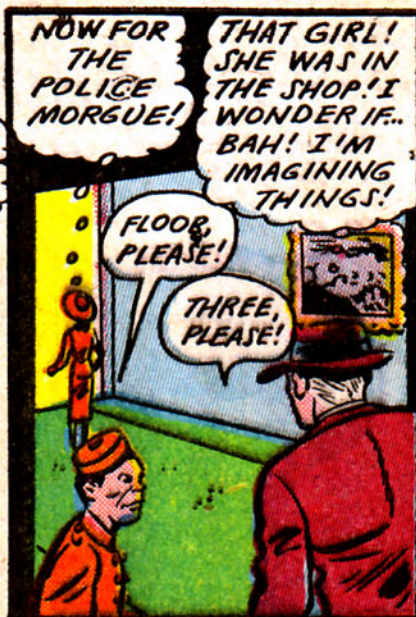
MMMM! I'D LIKE TO GET A LOOK AT THAT REGISTER.. H'MMM! I KNOW!



YES, MADAM?

OH, CLERK! THE GENTLEMAN THAT JUST REGISTERED! I BELIEVE HE'S AN OLD FRIEND, WHOM I HAVEN'T SEEN IN YEARS! D'YOU MIND IF I LOOK AT THE REGISTER?





SOMEONE
PAWNED
ONE AN'
THEY
RECOVERED
IT!

H'MMM!
EVERYTHING
FITS!

THANKS,
SARGE!

LEAVING POLICE
HEADQUARTERS...

GARCIA AND HIS
FRIEND OF THE
JEWELRY STORE
ARE IN THIS UP
TO THEIR NECKS!

GAIL MAKES HER WAY
TO THE NEAREST
TELEPHONE - - -

GARCIA'S RECORD LISTS
HIM AS A FORMER AIR-
LINE STEWARD! IT
WOULD BE EASY TO
GET A JOB WITH ONE
NOW, AND SIMPLE TO
HIDE A SMALL PACKAGE
OF DIAMONDS FROM
THE CUSTOM
OFFICIALS!

INTER-
AMERICAN
AIRLINES!

D'YOU
HAVE AN
ANGELO
GARCIA
IN YOUR
EMPLOY?
WOULD YOU
LOOK,
PLEASE?

YOU HAVE? HE'S A
STEWARD ON THE
MEXICO CITY RUN?
THANK
YOU!

WHAT A
BREAK! NOW,
IF I CAN GET
A COUPLE OF
PIX OF THE
DIAMONDS...

DASHING HOME TO HER
APARTMENT, GAIL PICKS
UP A LARGE HAND-BAG,
WITH A SPECIALLY BUILT
CAMERA, INSIDE!

I'LL PULL A GANDY ON
MANUEL, USING GARCIA
AS BAIT, AND IF MANUEL
BITES, THIS CAMERA'LL
DO THE
REST! OH!
OH! I ALMOST
FORGOT THE
CALL I
WANTED
TO MAKE!

F.B.I. -
JOE CARTER,
SPEAKING!

JOE? THIS IS GAIL!
YOU KNOW THESE
DIAMOND SMUGGLERS
YOU'RE AFTER?
WELL,
LISTEN...

LATER, GAIL HURRIES BACK TO
THE COSTUME JEWELRY SHOP!

SOMETHING
WRONG,
MADAM?

YES! THIS PIECE OF
JEWELRY I BOUGHT
HERE TODAY IS TOO
CHEAP! I UNDERSTAND,
A GIRL CAN
GET SOME
REAL
STUFF
HERE!



I'M SORRY, MA'AM! BUT THIS IS ALL WE HANDLE!

LOOK! YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE COY WITH ME! I WANT SOME NICE STONES, PREFERABLY FROM MEXICO! C'MON, IT'S ALL RIGHT! GARCIA SENT ME!



EH? GARCIA SHOULD INFORM ME OF WHOM HE SENDS OVER! WE'VE GOT TO BE CAREFUL, BUT...! ALL RIGHT, MISS! COME ALONG! I THINK WE HAVE WHAT YOU WANT!



AND IN HIS HOTEL ROOM AT THIS VERY MOMENT...

THAT GIRL! I CAN'T GET HER OFF MY MIND! IF SHE'S THE SAME ONE I SAW IN THE SHOP, AND SHE DID FOLLOW ME... DIABLO! -- I MUST MAKE CERTAIN! PERHAPS MANUEL WILL KNOW!

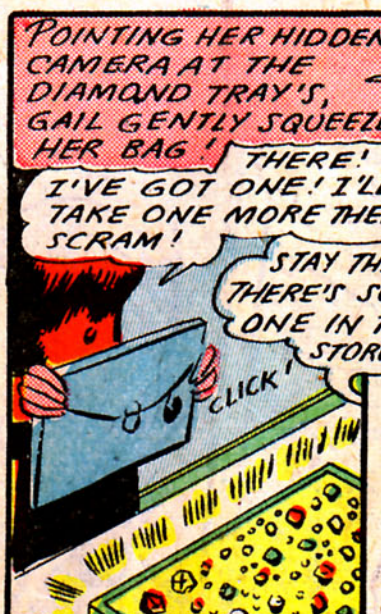
I'M SURE OF IT! WHEW! IF GARCIA ONLY KNEW!



MEANWHILE...

THEY ARE ALL HERE!

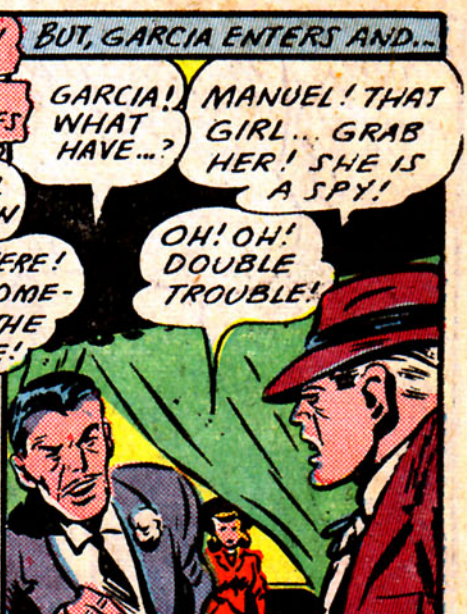
SO FAR, SO GOOD! I'LL SNAP A PICTURE, THEN BEAT IT! HE'S LIABLE TO GET SUSPICIOUS IF I HANG AROUND TOO LONG!



POINTING HER HIDDEN CAMERA AT THE DIAMOND TRAY'S, GAIL GENTLY SQUEEZES HER BAG! THERE!

I'VE GOT ONE! I'LL TAKE ONE MORE THEN SCRAM!

STAY THERE! THERE'S SOMEONE IN THE STORE!

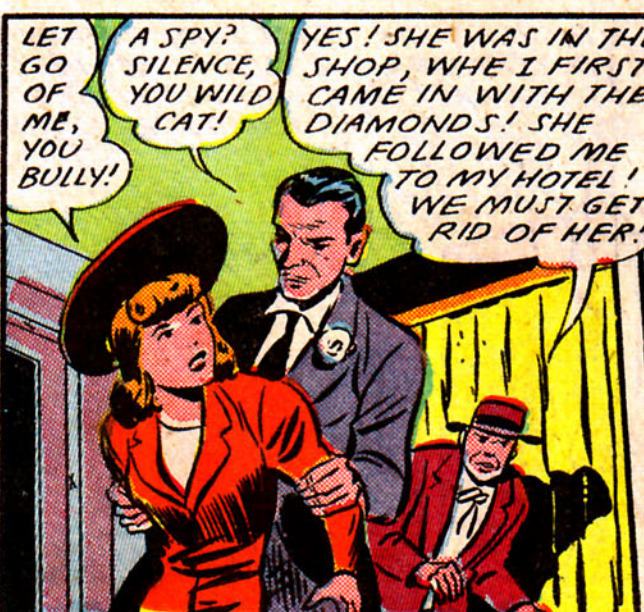


BUT, GARCIA ENTERS AND...

GARCIA! WHAT HAVE...?

MANUEL! THAT GIRL... GRAB HER! SHE IS A SPY!

OH! OH! DOUBLE TROUBLE!



LET GO OF ME, YOU BULLY!

A SPY? SILENCE, YOU WILD CAT!

YES! SHE WAS IN THE SHOP, WHE I FIRST CAME IN WITH THE DIAMONDS! SHE FOLLOWED ME TO MY HOTEL! WE MUST GET RID OF HER!



FIRST, I MUST HIDE THE STONES! WHEN I RETURN, WE SHALL SEE TO IT THAT SHE DISAPPEARS!

WHAT A JAM! I WONDER WHAT'S KEEPING THEM?

MANUEL RETURNS - - -

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH ME?

TRUSS YOU UP, WEIGH YOU DOWN WITH SCRAP METAL, AND SINK YOU IN THE RIVER! A FITTING END!

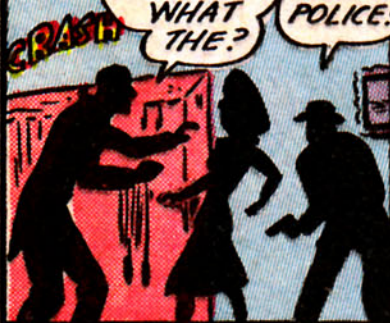


BUT AS MANUEL APPROACHES GAIL - -

OKAY, PUNKS! GRAB A FIST-FULL OF SKY!

NOW, MY LITTLE-- WHAT THE?

THE POLICE!



THE F.B.I. OH, JOE! I'KNEW YOU'D COME ACROSS!

F.B.I. WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE, MY FRIENDS?

A LITTLE MATTER OF SMUGGLED DIAMONDS! WHERE ARE THEY, GAIL?



I DON'T KNOW, JOE! MANUEL HID THEM!

IF I HAVE DIAMONDS, THEY ARE HIDDEN WELL! BUT I DENY EVERYTHING! IF YOU CANNOT PRODUCE THESE MYTHICAL GEMS, I SUGGEST YOU RELEASE ME!



HE'S RIGHT, GAIL! UNLESS WE HAVE PROOF THAT HE HAD THE DIAMONDS IN HIS POSSESSION, WE'LL HAVE TO LET HIM GO!

BUT, I HAVE PROOF! LOOK- MY CAMERA IN MY BAG!

YOU, SHE-CAT!



MANUEL GOES FOR HIS GUN, BUT - - -

TRY AND PHOTOGRAPH THIS, YOU--? A'HHH! MY HAND!

DROP IT, MANUEL!

I ALREADY HAVE!



ALL RIGHT! I KNOW WHEN I'M LIKED! THEY'RE IN THE BASEMENT!

RIGHT! O'KAY, BOYS! TAKE 'EM AWAY!

ONE MORE SHOT, GUYS! FOR PAGE ONE!



THAT SAME EVENING, SERGEANT MCGINTY READS HIS COPY OF THE DAILY CHRONICLE

I'LL BE...? IF SHE DIDN'T DO IT AGAIN!



GAIL PORTER WILL BE HERE AGAIN TO THRILL YOU NEXT MONTH!

Toreador



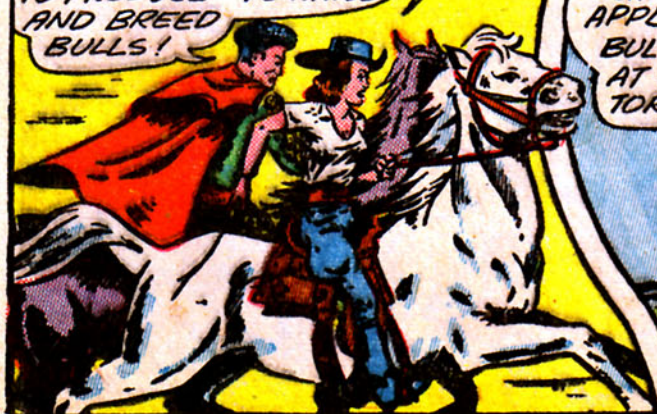
EL TOREADOR WHO'S REAL NAME IS RON RUSSELL, IS AN AMERICAN. HE HAS THE REPUTATION OF BEING THE GREATEST BULL FIGHTER IN ALL MEXICO! EL TOREADOR, BETWEEN BULL FIGHTS, ACTS AS PATSY KING'S FOREMAN ON THE HUGE RANCH LEFT TO HER BY HER UNCLE. SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN EL TOREADOR AND PATSY KING START THEIR "GOOD NEIGHBOR" PROGRAM!

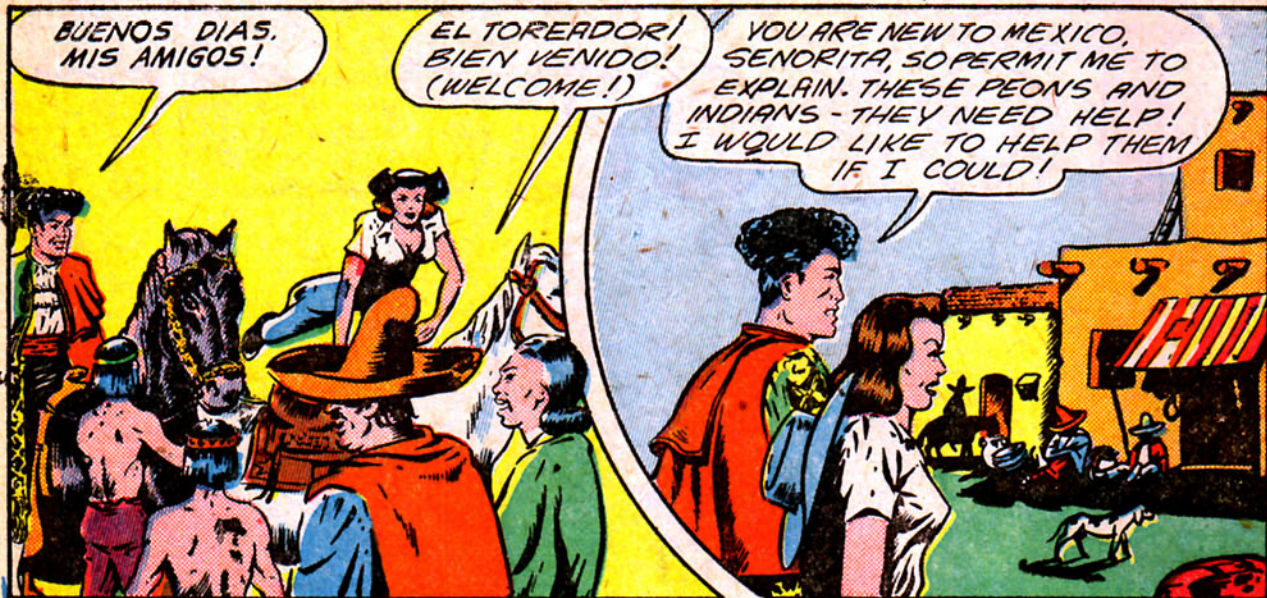
I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE WELL, SENORITA, AS LONG AS YOU ARE LOOKING FOR SOMETHING FOR THE RANCH TO PRODUCE - TO RAISE AND BREED BULLS!

YOU MEAN FOR THE BULL FIGHT RING IN MEXICO CITY?

SI! IF YOUR BULLS BECOME FAMOUS AS FIGHTERS, YOU CAN SHARE THE APPLAUSE WITH THE BULL FIGHTERS AT THE PLAZA DEL TOROS IN MEXICO CITY!

I AGREE ABOUT RAISING BULLS, BUT I'LL SHARE NO APPLAUSE WITH ANYONE, BECAUSE I WON'T BE THERE BEING APPLAUDED!

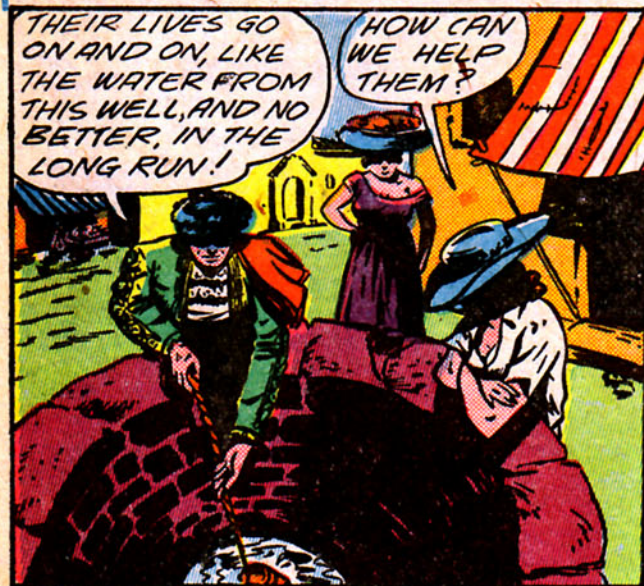




BUENOS DIAS.
MIS AMIGOS!

EL TOREADOR!
BIEN VENIDO!
(WELCOME!)

YOU ARE NEW TO MEXICO,
SENORITA, SO PERMIT ME TO
EXPLAIN. THESE PEONS AND
INDIANS - THEY NEED HELP!
I WOULD LIKE TO HELP THEM
IF I COULD!



THEIR LIVES GO
ON AND ON, LIKE
THE WATER FROM
THIS WELL, AND NO
BETTER, IN THE
LONG RUN!

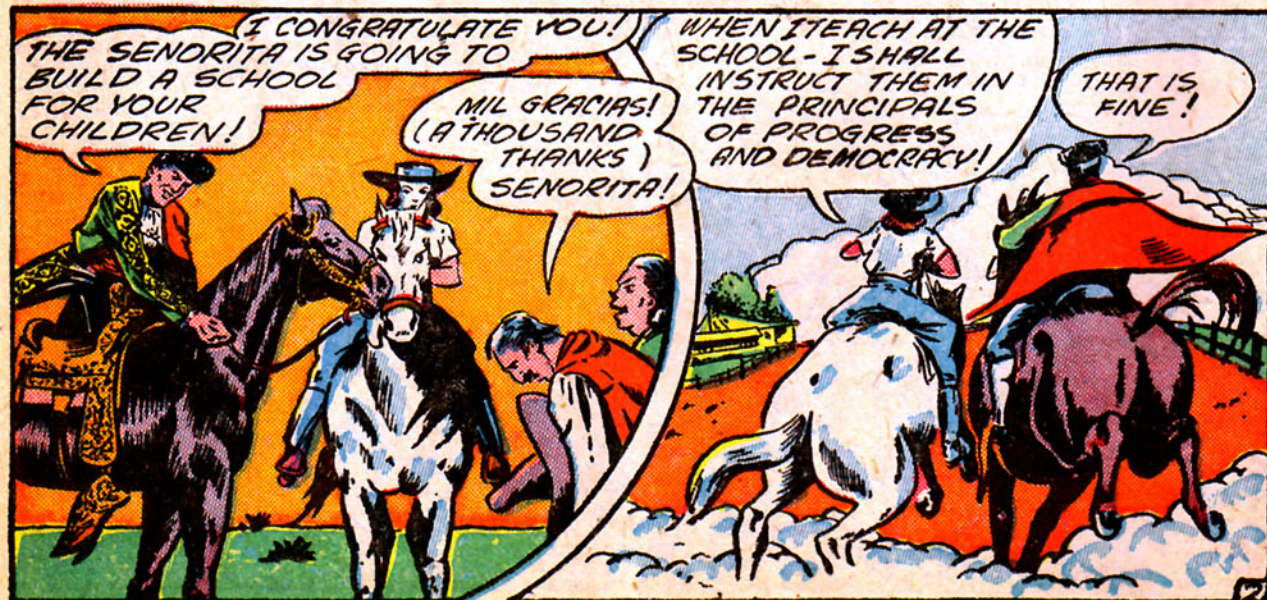
HOW CAN
WE HELP
THEM?



THEY NEED SCHOOLING.
THEN THEY WOULD
KNOW WHAT IT
MEANS TO IMPROVE
THEMSELVES!

SCHOOL!
I SHALL
BUILD ONE ON
MY RANCH -
AND I WILL BE
THEIR TEACHER -

AS I PROBABLY
COULDN'T GET A
TEACHER TO
COME OUT
HERE!



I CONGRATULATE YOU!
THE SENORITA IS GOING TO
BUILD A SCHOOL
FOR YOUR
CHILDREN!

MIL GRACIAS!
(A THOUSAND
THANKS)
SENORITA!

WHEN I TEACH AT THE
SCHOOL - I SHALL
INSTRUCT THEM IN
THE PRINCIPALS
OF PROGRESS
AND DEMOCRACY!

THAT IS
FINE!

BACK AT PATSY KING'S RANCH - PEDRO, EL TOREADOR'S FAITHFUL ASSISTANT, COMES TO MEET THEM.

HOLA, AMIGO! (HELLO, FRIEND!) MY BULL, DELILAH, SHE IS FINE! SHE IS VERY FINE! WE HEAR ALREADY ABOUT THE SCHOOL, AND THAT I'M TO BUILD IT!

YES, PEDRO! FEED AND WATER

THE HORSES! YOU AND I WILL RIDE!

SEÑOR, PLEASE DO ME THE FAVOR! WHERE TO ARE WE RIDING? PORQUE?

WE ARE GOING TO SEE THE OWNER OF THE LARGE RANCH ADJOINING THIS ONE! ON A "GOOD NEIGHBOR" VISIT!

ON A "GOOD NEIGHBOR" VISIT!



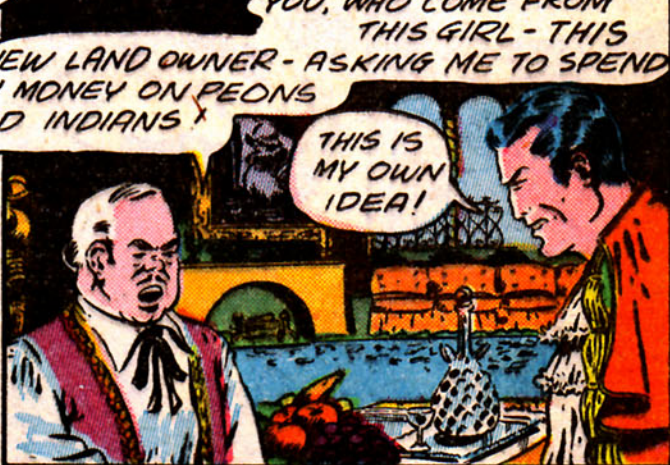
WE'RE GOING TO ASK HIM TO HELP US WITH THE SCHOOL'S EXPENSE!

THAT COCHINO! (PIG) HE DOES THINGS BUT FOR HIMSELF!

IN A LARGE, LAVISHLY FURNISHED ROOM OF THE RANCH OWNER'S HACIENDA...

YOU, WHO COME FROM THIS GIRL - THIS NEW LAND OWNER - ASKING ME TO SPEND MY MONEY ON PEONS AND INDIANS!

THIS IS MY OWN IDEA!



A SCHOOL! POR DIOS! AND YOU, PEDRO! YOU ARE TO BUILD THIS SCHOOL? HA!

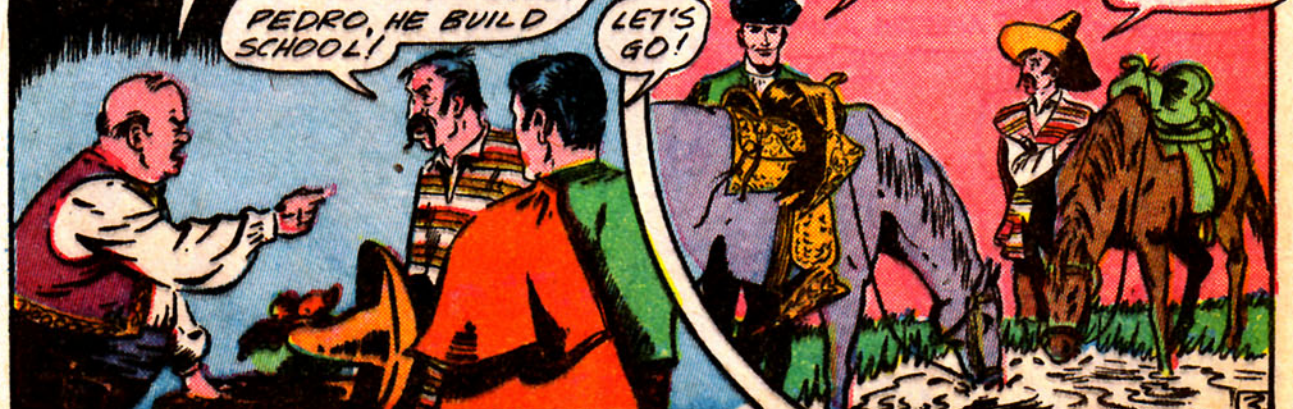
SI! SEÑOR! IF IT IS TO HELP THESE POOR PEONS AND INDIANS, THEN I AM GLAD!

PEDRO, HE BUILD SCHOOL!

IT IS TOO BAD WE COULDN'T MAKE HIM SEE IT OUR WAY, PEDRO! TOO BAD HE COULDN'T BE A "GOOD NEIGHBOR"

SI, EL TOREADOR!

LET'S GO!

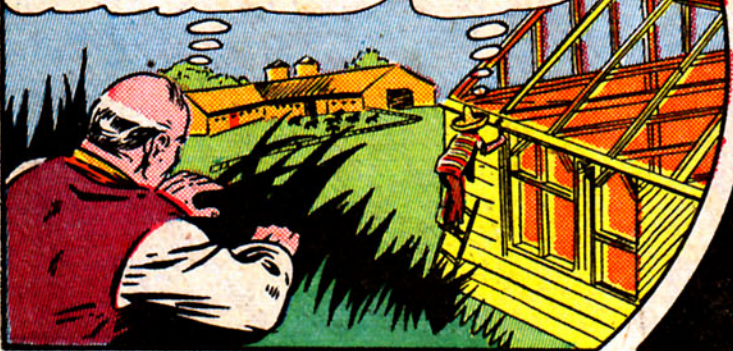


SOMETIME LATER, THE CRAFTY RANCH OWNER, SPYS UPON PEDRO, WHO'S BUILDING THE SCHOOL HOUSE!

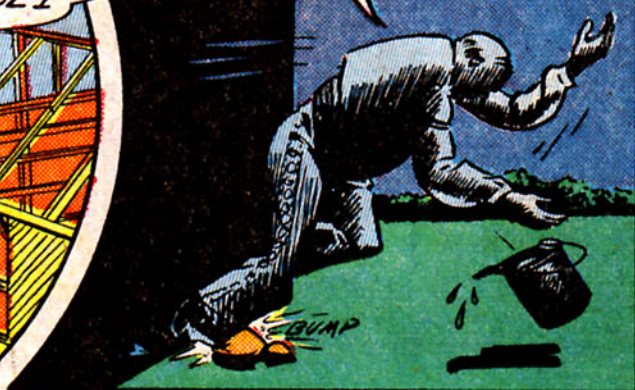
THAT NIGHT, A SINISTER FIGURE STEALS THROUGH THE BLACKNESS, BUT...

THAT SCHOOL! IT SHALL NOT COMPETE WITH MY GRIP ON THE PEONS AND INDIANS! TONIGHT-I SHALL DESTROY IT WITH FIRE!

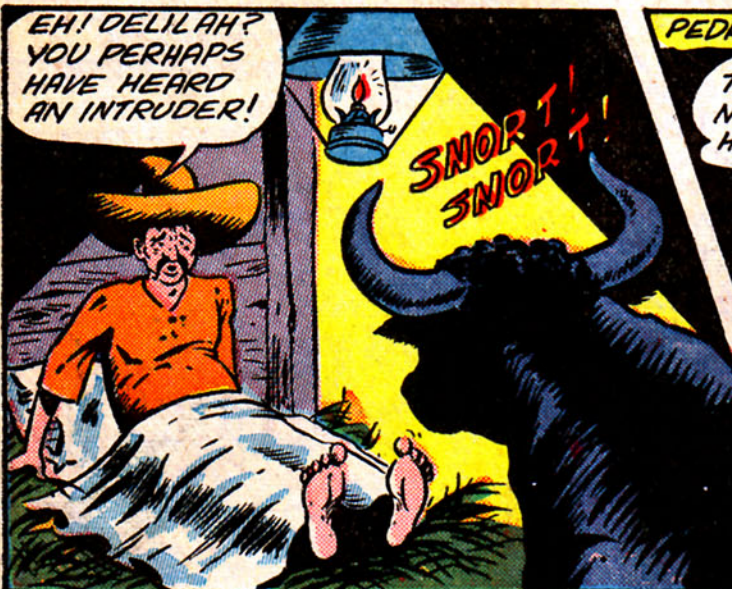
TOO BAD MY TORO, "DELILAH", SHE CANNOT ATTEND THIS SCHOOL I BUILD!



CARAMBA!



EH! DELILAH? YOU PERHAPS HAVE HEARD AN INTRUDER!



SNORT!
SNORT!

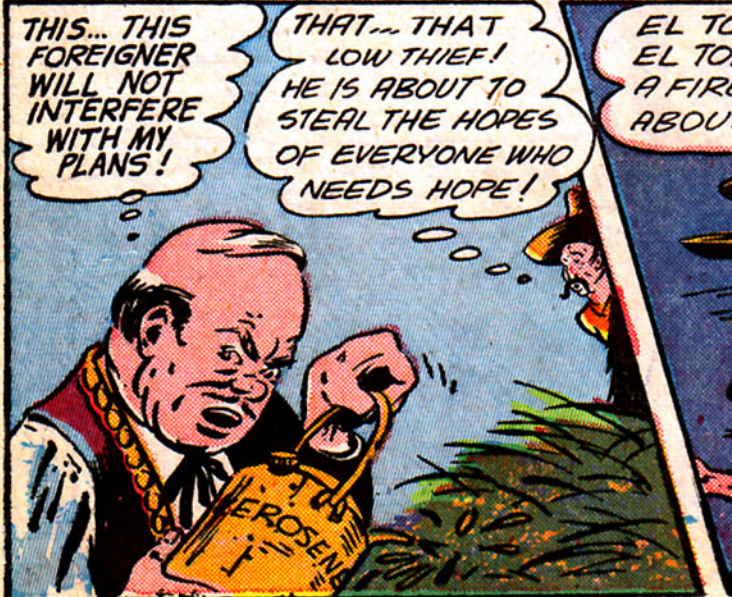
PEDRO DECIDES TO INVESTIGATE!

THAT RANCH OWNER! NOW, WHAT IS HE DOING HERE?

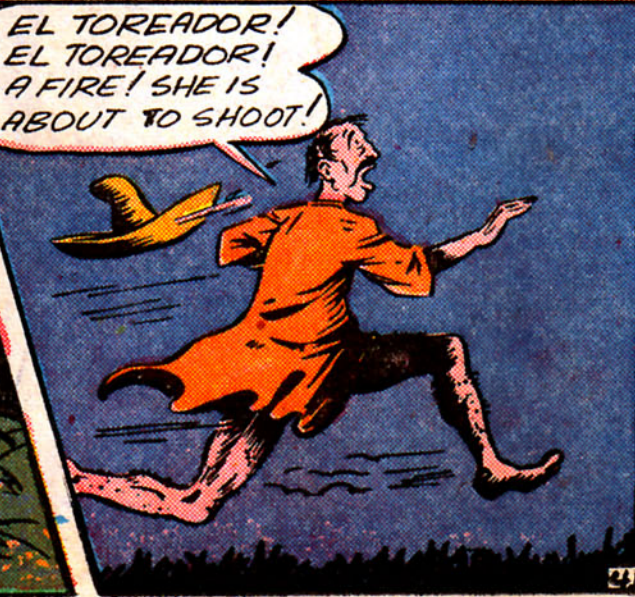


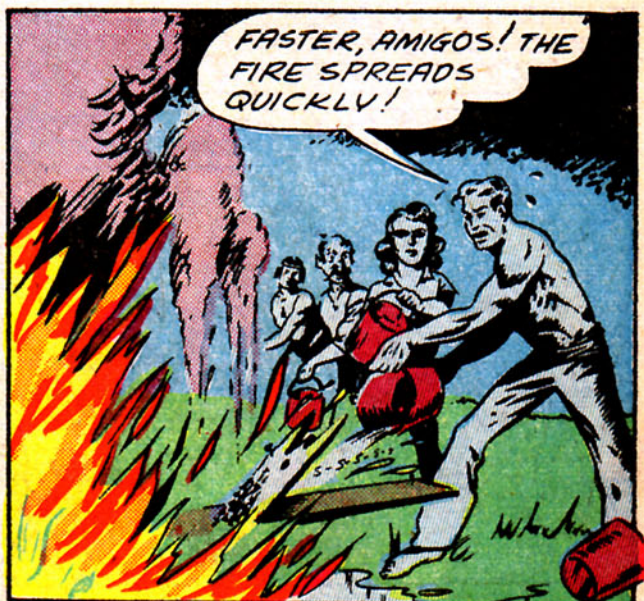
THIS... THIS FOREIGNER WILL NOT INTERFERE WITH MY PLANS!

THAT... THAT LOW THIEF! HE IS ABOUT TO STEAL THE HOPES OF EVERYONE WHO NEEDS HOPE!

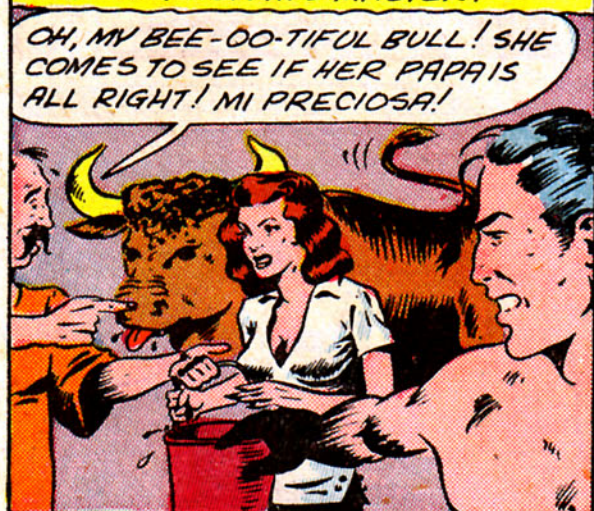


EL TOREADOR! EL TOREADOR! A FIRE! SHE IS ABOUT TO SHOOT!





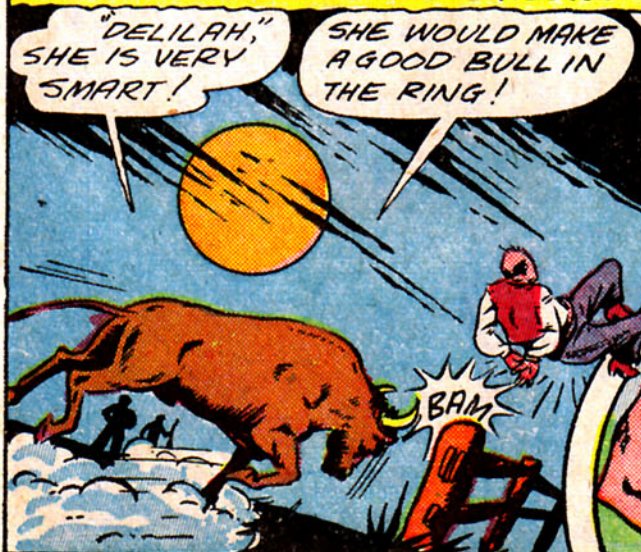
"DELILAH" PEDRO'S PET BULL COMES LOOKING FOR HIS MASTER!



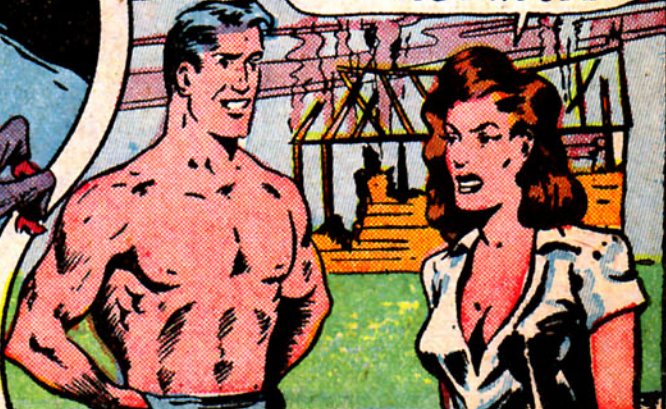
SUDDENLY THE VILLIANOUS RANCH OWNER SPRINGS UP FROM HIS HIDING PLACE AND ATTEMPTS TO ESCAPE! PEDRO GRABS HIS SHOTGUN...



"DELILAH" COMES TO PEDRO'S RESCUE!



OUR "GOOD NEIGHBOR" POLICY MUST GO ON! THIS WILL NOT STOP IT! YES, TOMORROW WE START REBUILDING THE SCHOOL HOUSE!



THE FOLLOWING DAY, EL TOREADOR AND PEDRO RIDE OVER TO THE ADJOINING RANCH, TO THE WORKER'S QUARTERS.

TONIGHT, AMIGOS, WE MEET ON SENORITA KING'S RANCH!

AT MIDNIGHT!

SI!

THE MAN YOU WORK FOR HAS NO INTEREST IN YOU! HE IS A FOLLOWER OF THE ARROGANT DIAZ AND THE OLD ARISTOCRACY OF MEXICO! HE IS AN OLD FEUDAL DIE-HARD!

THAT NIGHT! AMIGOS, I HAVE CALLED YOU HERE TONIGHT, BECAUSE YOU WORK ON THE RANCH ADJOINING THIS ONE. YOU WORK ON THAT RANCH FOR LITTLE MONEY BUT HAVE HARD WORK AND LONG HOURS!

AS YOU KNOW, AMIGOS, I AM AN AMERICAN! SENORITA KING IS AN AMERICAN! PEDRO, HERE, IS FROM YOUR COUNTRY AND SO IS "DELILAH"! WE ARE ALL TRYING TO HELP YOU!

LAST NIGHT, THE MAN YOU WORK FOR BURNED DOWN THE SCHOOL IN WHICH SENORITA KING WOULD HAVE TAUGHT YOUR CHILDREN HOW TO HELP THEMSELVES IN LIFE!

YES! WE SAW HIM FLEE!

THAT BESTIA! (BEAST!)

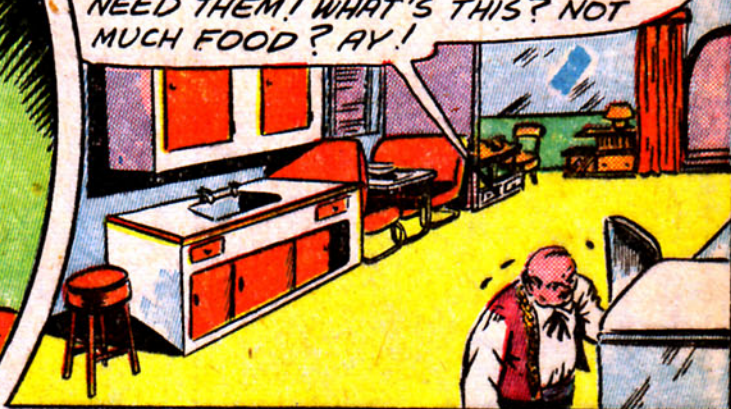
LYNCH HIM!

NO AMIGOS, THAT'S NOT THE WAY! A GENERAL STRIKE-NOW, THAT IS SOMETHING! THEN NO ONE IS HURT, AND YOU GET WHAT YOU WANT!

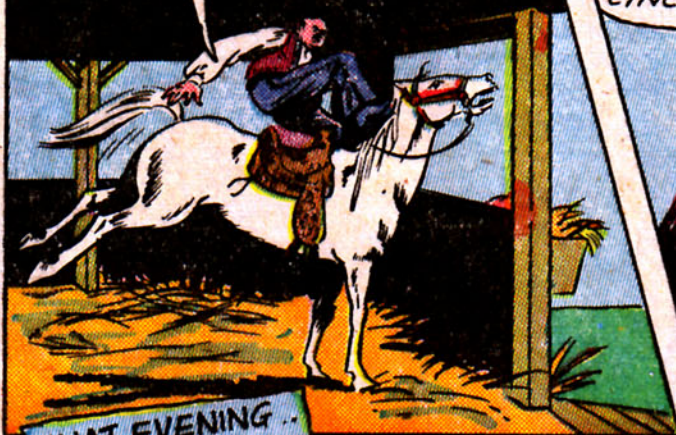


THE PEONS AND INDIANS AGREE WITH EL TOREADOR AND ALL GO OUT ON A GENERAL STRIKE, LEAVING THE RANCH OWNER WITH NO ONE TO SERVE HIM!

HUH, I SHALL SHOW THEM I DON'T NEED THEM! WHAT'S THIS? NOT MUCH FOOD? AY!

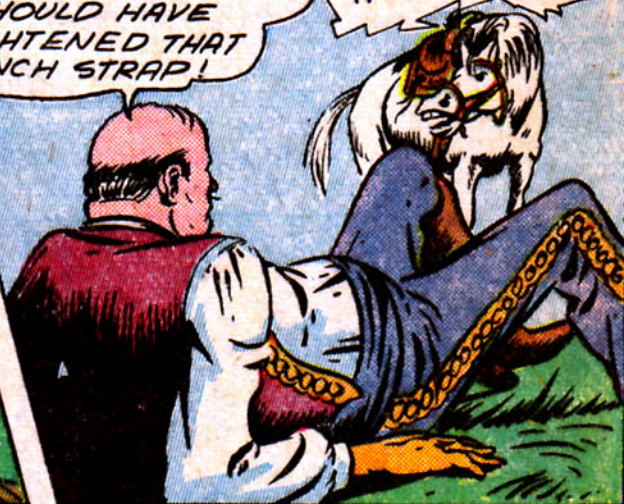


IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I SADDLED A HORSE! NOW WHERE DOES... OH...!

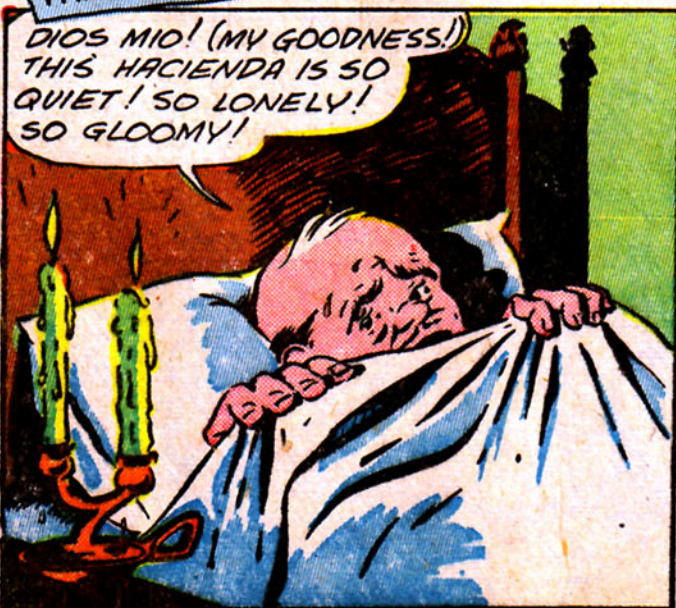


STOP LAUGHING, YOU BEAST! I GUESS I SHOULD HAVE TIGHTENED THAT CINCH STRAP!

HEE AHHH!



DIOS MIO! (MY GOODNESS!) THIS HACIENDA IS SO QUIET! SO LONELY! SO GLOOMY!

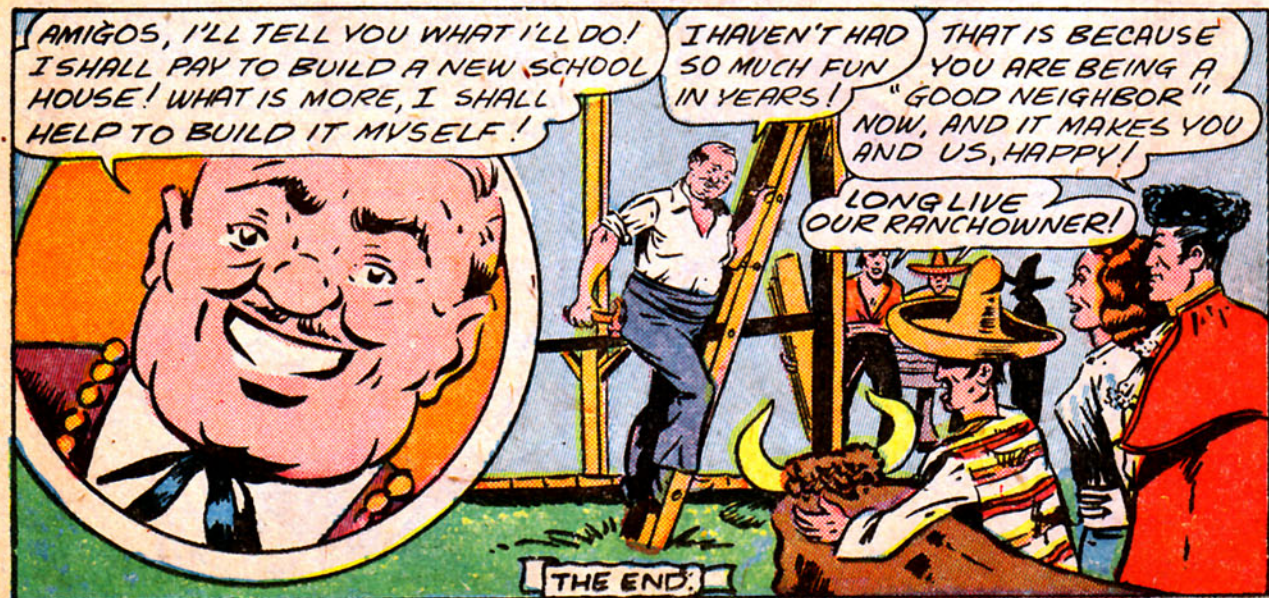
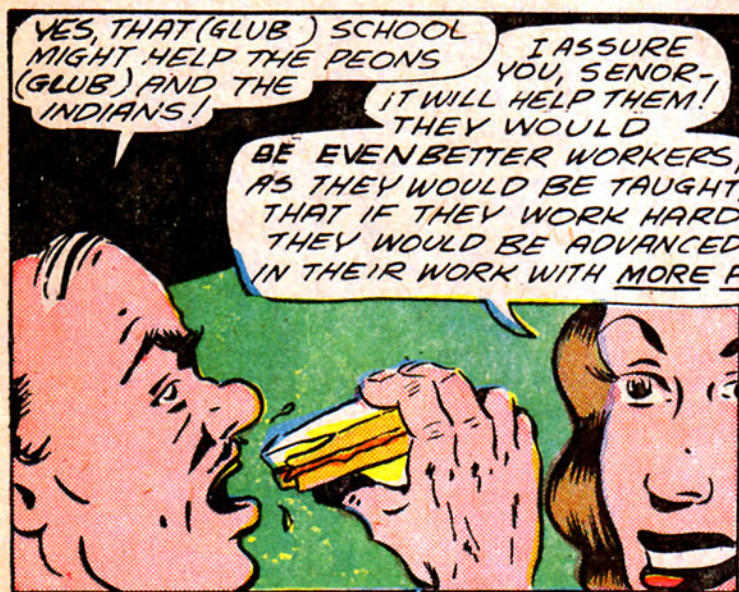
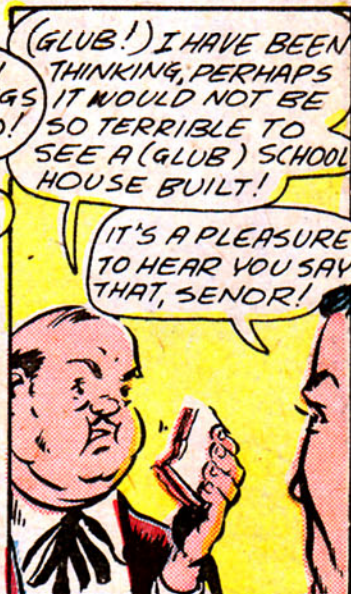


THE NEXT MORNING, THE RANCH OWNER SUCCEEDS IN SADDLING HIS HORSE!

COME ON!

NO MORE WILL I SPEND A NIGHT ALONE, IT IS TOO MELANCHOLY!



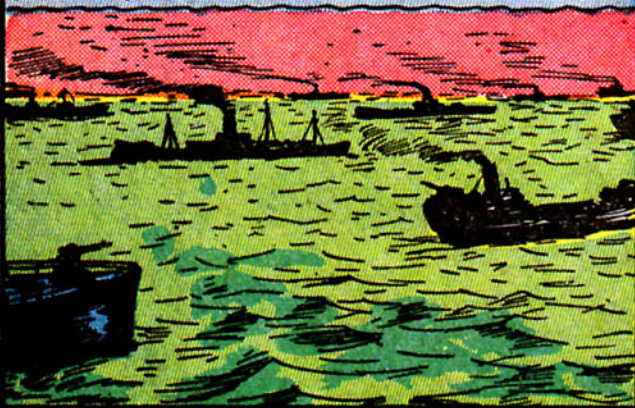


MAUREEN MARINE



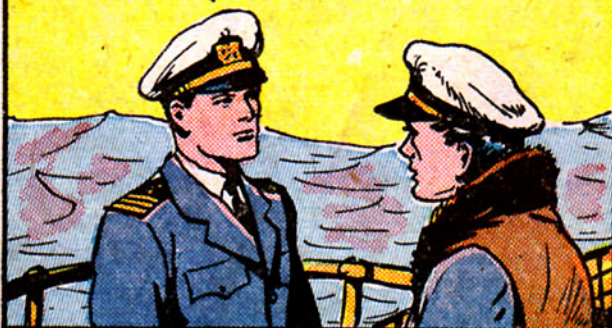
WHAT STRANGE PORTRAIT IS THIS? HAVE THE NAZIS WHO ARE ON THE ROAD TO MISERABLE DEFEAT ATTEMPTING THE CONQUEST OF ATLANTIS AND THE UNDERSEA PEOPLE OR HAS DESTINY PROJECTED THEM MILES BELOW THE OCEAN SURFACE TO PLAY THEIR LAST ROLES AS WOULD-BE-CONQUERERS IN THIS STORY OF "**U-BOAT NUMBER 777**"

OUR STORY STARTS IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC CONVOY ROUTE, WHERE AN ALLIED CONVOY STEAMS TOWARD ENGLAND...



WE SHOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE ON THIS RUN, JACKSON!

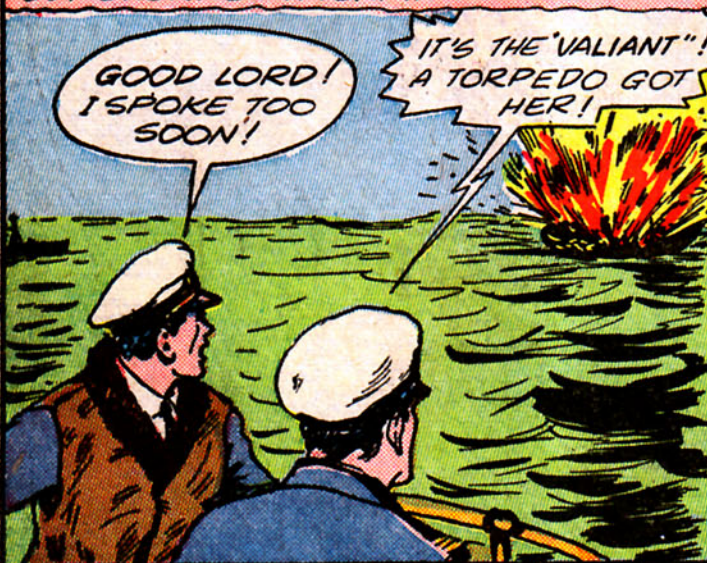
NO! NOT WITH OUR EFFECTIVE ANTI-SUB NETWORK!



BUT... THE MATE'S WORDS ARE RUDELY CUT SHORT BY A TERRIFIC EXPLOSION AS...

GOOD LORD! I SPOKE TOO SOON!

IT'S THE 'VALIANT'!
A TORPEDO GOT HER!

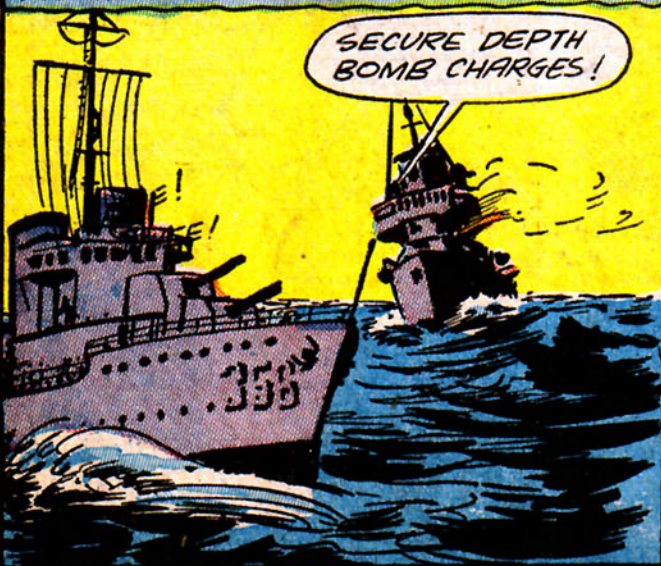


SOUND GENERAL HEADQUARTERS!
SUBMARINE IN THE VICINITY ATTACKING!



THE AMERICAN DESTROYERS CONVOYING THE GROUP WHEELS INTO ACTION!

SECURE DEPTH BOMB CHARGES!



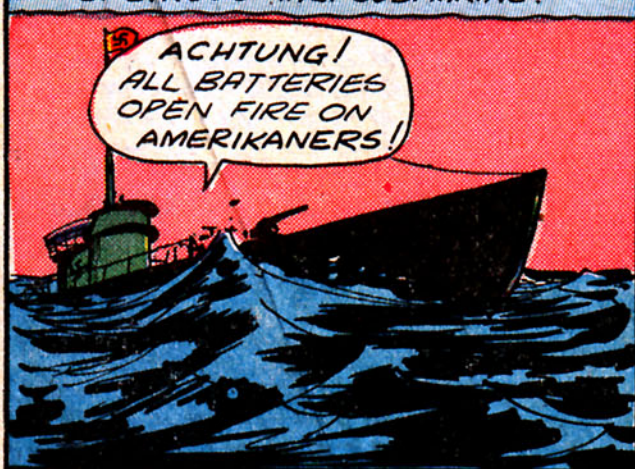
JUST THEN A LOOKOUT SPOTS...

HOLY SMOKES!
LOOK AT THAT COMING OUT OF THE WATER!



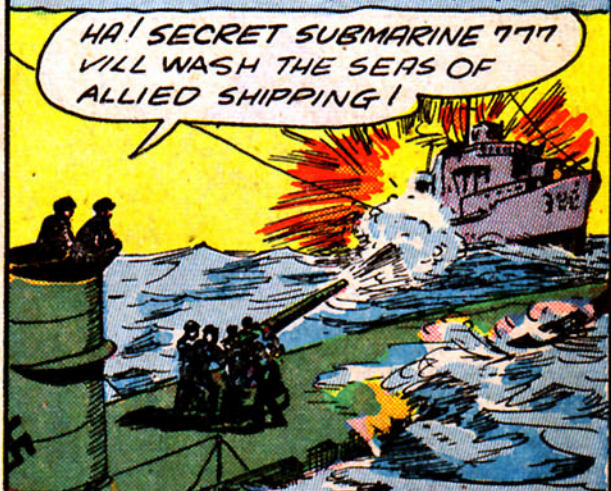
THEN IT HAPPENS... A HUGE CIGAR SHAPED OBJECT BREAKS THE WATER... A MONSTROUS NAZI SUBMARINE!

ACHTUNG!
ALL BATTERIES
OPEN FIRE ON
AMERIKANERS!



A TITANIC BATTLE LOOMS! ONE OF OUR DESTROYERS IS HIT!

HA! SECRET SUBMARINE 777
VILL WASH THE SEAS OF
ALLIED SHIPPING!



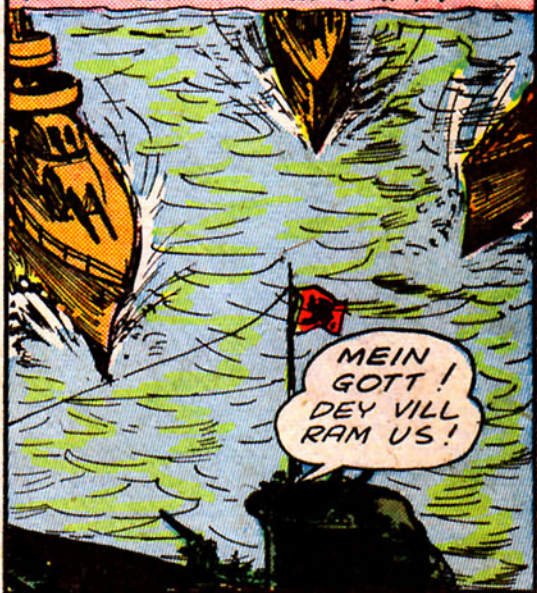
ABOARD ONE DESTROYER.

SPARKS! RADIO DESTROYER
403-721 AND 962 TO CONVERGE
UPON SUBMARINE FOR CRASH
ATTACK!

AYE, AYE,
SIR!



ALL GUNS BLAZING, THE THREE
DESTROYERS BEAR DOWN ON
THE IMMENSE NAZI CRAFT!



MEIN
GOTT!
DEY VILL
RAM US!

A THUNDEROUS CRASH ECHOES OVER THE OCEAN AS THE THREE
DESTROYERS SIMULTANEOUSLY RAM THE MONSTER SUB!



HER SIDES STOVED IN, THE U-BOAT
777 HEELS OVER AND SINKS!

HOORAY!
SHE'S GOING
UNDER!

MEANWHILE - WITHIN THE SUNKEN FIG-
BOAT, RUTHLESS COMMANDER VON
COUTH BELLOW'S SHARP ORDERS!

ACHTUNG! ALL CREWMEN TO THE
PRESSURE CHAMBER! WE CAN
LIVE SAFELY IN THERE
UNTIL...

THE STRICKEN UNDERSEA
VESSEL LUNGES DEEPER INTO
THE OCEAN!

GOOD! ALL HANDS
ACCOUNTED FOR. WE
WILL AWAIT OUR DESTINY
IN THIS PRESSURE
CHAMBER!

WHILE UNTOLD FATHOMS BELOW, IN THE
FABLED CITY OF ATLANTIS, QUEEN
MAUREEN IS INTERRUPTED BY AN
EXCITED MESSENGER...

WHAT IS IT,
GOMPI?

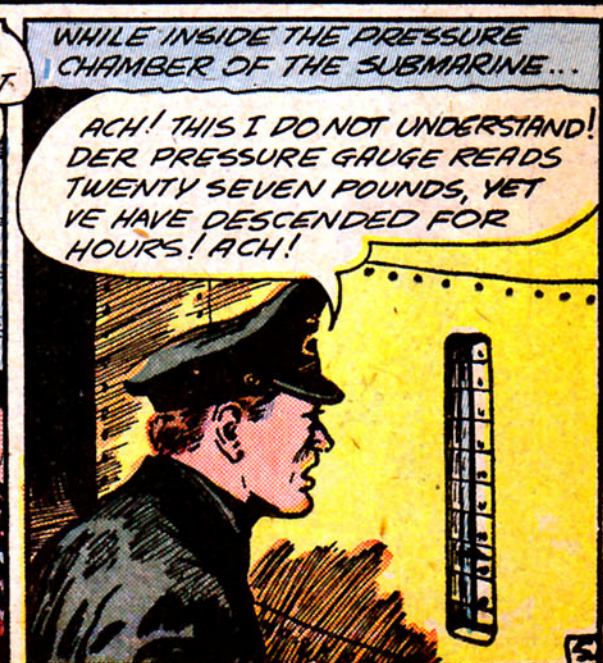
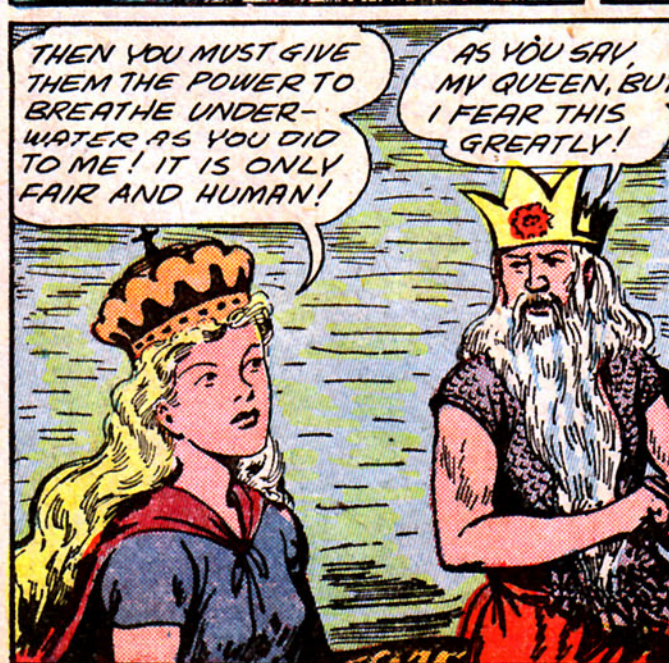
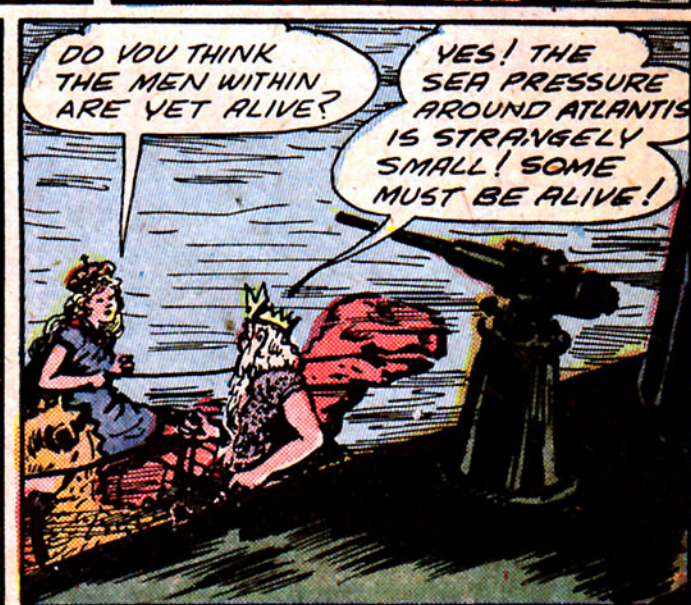
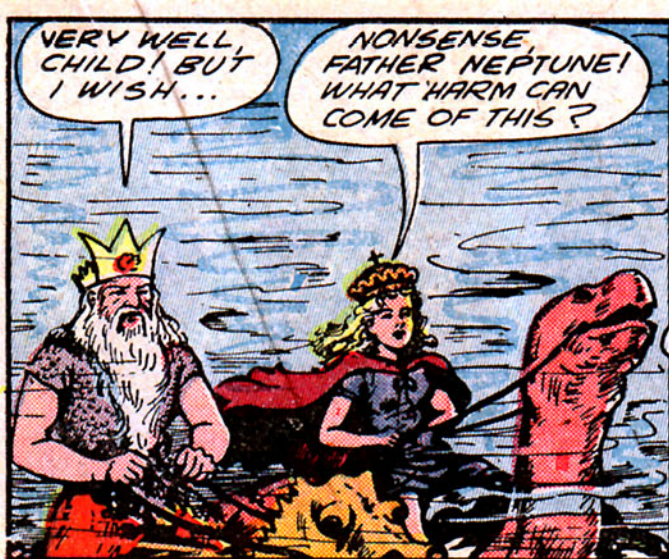
HAIL, MY QUEEN!
I HAVE STRANGE
NEWS!

FROM THE WORLD ABOVE, A STRANGE
CRAFT HAS DESCENDED. THIS
VERY MOMENT IT IS ABOUT TO NESTLE
ON THE BED OF THE
PLAIN OUTSIDE OF
ATLANTIS!

WHAT?

MY CHILD, I FEAR GREAT
TROUBLE FOR ATLANTIS
IS IN THE MAKING. MUST
WE SEE THIS
STRANGE CRAFT?

YES,
FATHER
NEPTUNE!
IT HAS COME FROM
MY FORMER WORLD.
I AM INTERESTED!



SUDDENLY...

HIMMEL! WHAT
ISS DOT TAPPING
FROM DER
OUTSIDE? COULD
IT BE...?

TAP TAP TAP!

QUICK! VE VILL
TAKE DER
CHANCE! OPEN
DER AIR LOCKS!

JA, MEIN
KAPITAN!

INTO THE SUBMARINE WALKS MAUREEN
AND FATHER NEPTUNE, MUCH TO THE
SURPRISE OF THE NAZIS!

GREETINGS! IN THE
NAME OF QUEEN MAUREEN
WE WELCOME YOU TO
ATLANTIS!

ATLANTIS!

YES! OUR HISTORY IS OLD BUT TIME
IS TOO SHORT. I HAVE COME TO
BARGAIN WITH YOU! ON YOUR
PROMISE NOT TO STIR UP
TROUBLE, I WILL EMPOWER YOU
WITH THE ABILITY TO BREATHE
UNDERWATER!

IF WHAT YOU PROMISE TO DO
CAN BE DONE, I AGREE FOR
ME AND MY MEN! I WOULD
LIKE TO SEE THIS CITY OF
ATLANTIS! THIS IS UNBELIEVABLE!

VERY WELL
HAVE YOUR
MEN GET
READY!

THE NAZIS ARE GIVEN THE POWER TO
BREATHE UNDERWATER! LATER, THEY
MARCH TOWARD ATLANTIS, AWED BY
THE FABLED SPECTACLE.

WHAT HERR HITLER
WOULD GIVE TO SEE THIS..
HA! THESE DOLTS HAFF
TAKEN ME INTO THEIR
UTMOST CONFIDENCE.

MUCH LATER, VON COUTH AND HIS MEN ASSEMBLED BEFORE QUEEN MAUREEN...

AS QUEEN OF ALL ATLANTIS I WELCOME YOU TO OUR DOMAIN OF PEACE!

WE ARE HONORED, GREAT QUEEN!

TELL ME - WHY HAVE YOU AND YOUR MEN BROUGHT THOSE BOXES WITH YOU?

THERE ARE VALUABLE GIFTS WITHIN FOR THE KIND QUEEN!

OPEN THE BOXES, MEN AND SHOW DER QUEEN DER LAVISH GIFTS!

JA!

THE BOXES OPEN... OUT COME SPECIAL UNDERWATER INSTRUMENTS OF DEATH!

HA! VE NAZIS ARE NOT FOOLS! OPEN FIRE ON THE ROYAL GUARDS!

JA!

THE DULL THUD OF PROJECTED BULLETS SOUNDS AS THE ROYAL GUARDS ARE ANNIHILATED BY THE RUTHLESS NAZIS!

KILL THEM ALL! ATLANTIS WILL BECOME A SOVEREIGN ARM OF GREATER GERMANY UNDER DER SEA!

AGH

A-IEEE!

UND NOW, QUEEN MAUREEN...
VE VILL SPARE YOUR LIFE
FOR BEING KIND TO US, IF
YOU VILL CONSENT TO
RULE YOUR PEOPLE
UNDER MY AUTHORITY!

OH, FATHER
NEPTUNE!
WHAT SHOULD
WE DO! THEY
ARE MURDERERS!

GIVE US SOME
TIME TO THINK
THIS OVER! WE
ARE HELPLESS
IN YOUR HANDS!

TIME,
BAH!
DECIDE
AT ONCE!

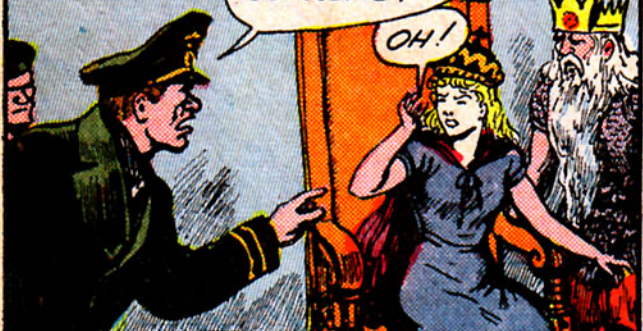


MINUTES LATER... THE IRATE NAZI
LEADER BELLOWES...

BAH! I CANNOT WAIT!
YOU HAVE STALLED ENOUGH!
YOU DIE! I VILL RULE
SUPREME!

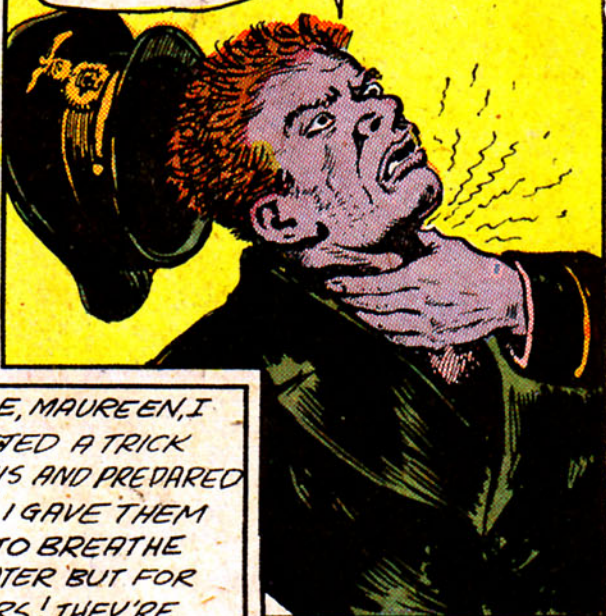
FOOL!

OH!



JUST THEN, VON COUTH TURNS AN
UGLY GREY AS SOME INVISIBLE
FORCE GRIPS HIM!

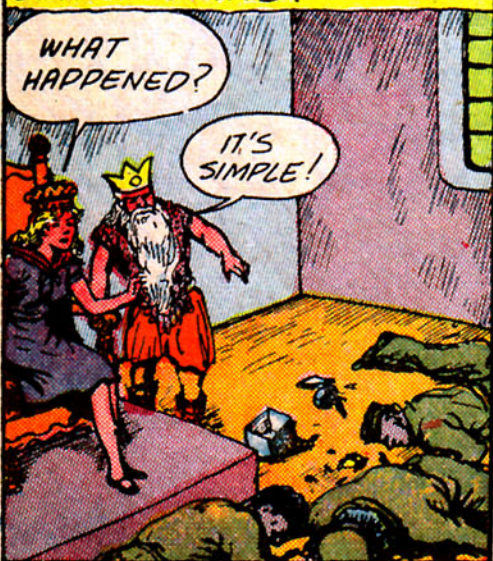
AGHHHHH!
MY THROAT



THE SAME FATE BEFALLS THE
REMAINING NAZIS... SOON-
NAUGHT BUT THE SILENT
DEATH REIGNS!

WHAT
HAPPENED?

IT'S
SIMPLE!



YOU SEE, MAUREEN, I
SUSPECTED A TRICK
LIKE THIS AND PREPARED
FOR IT! I GAVE THEM
POWER TO BREATHE
UNDERWATER BUT FOR
TWO HOURS! THEY'RE
TIME WAS UP AT THE
SHOOTING!

I WILL NEVER
TRUST THE NAZI
SCOUNDRELS
AGAIN!



BUT!
YOU BETTER
TRUST IN UNCLE
SAM, DEAR
READER AND
SPURGEON A
SPENDING SPREE
OF BUYING WAR
BONDS AND
STAMPS!

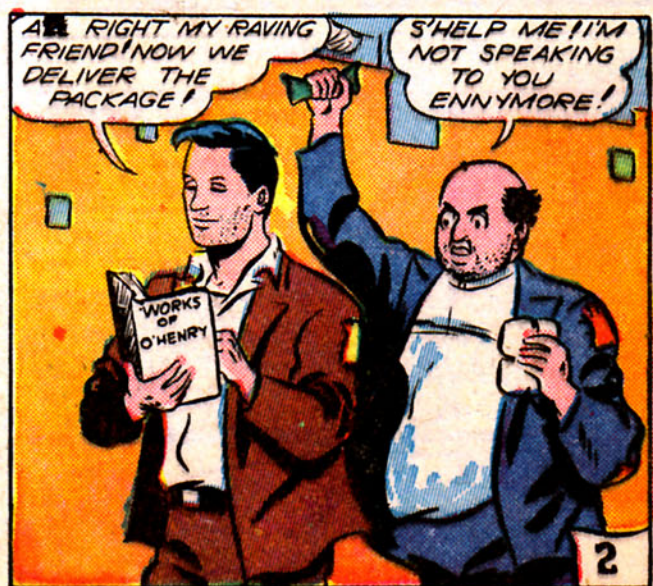
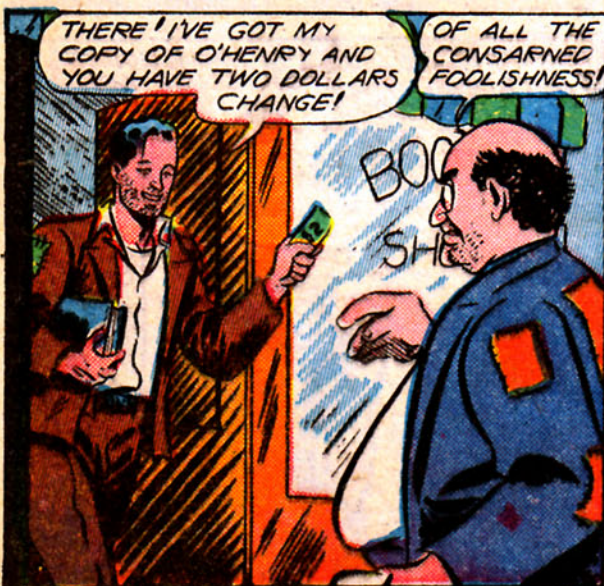
Shanx.

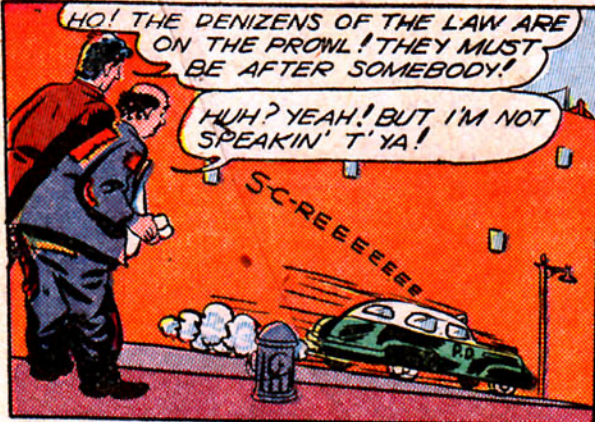
DRIFTWOOD Davey



WE FIND OUR ITINERATE FRIENDS IN SAN FRANCISCO WHERE ---



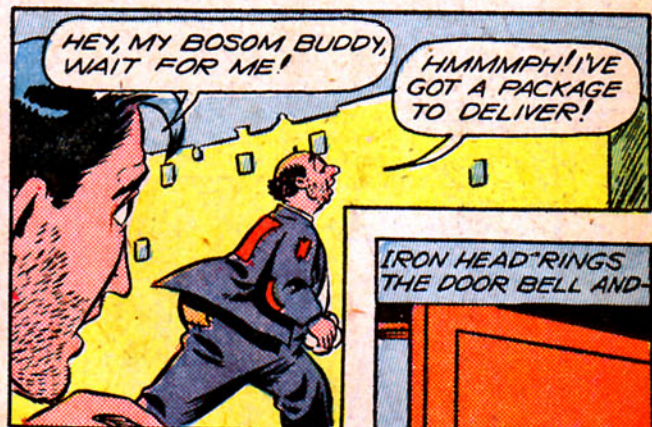




HO! THE DENIZENS OF THE LAW ARE ON THE PROWL! THEY MUST BE AFTER SOMEBODY!

HUH? YEAH! BUT I'M NOT SPEAKIN' T' YA!

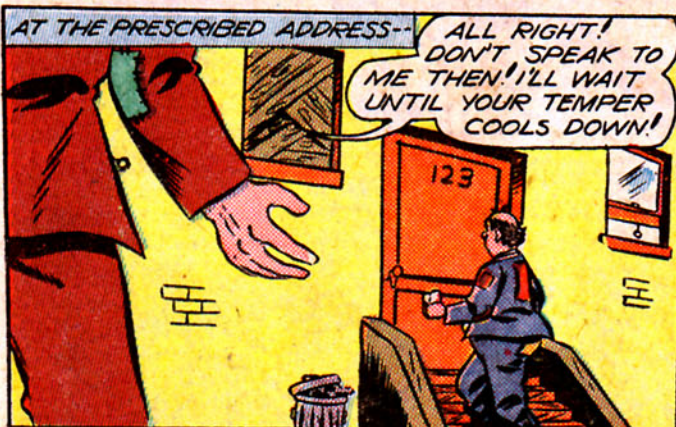
SC-REEEEEE



HEY, MY BOSOM BUDDY, WAIT FOR ME!

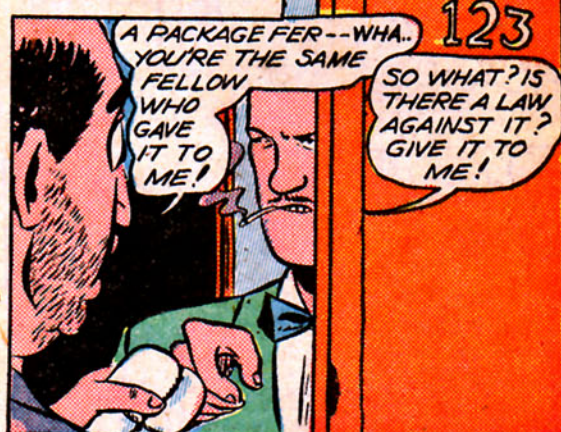
HMMMMPH! I'VE GOT A PACKAGE TO DELIVER!

IRON HEAD'RINGS THE DOOR BELL AND-



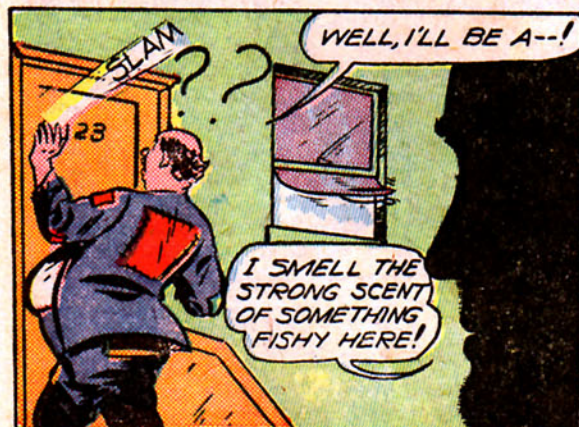
AT THE PRESCRIBED ADDRESS--

ALL RIGHT! DON'T SPEAK TO ME THEN! I'LL WAIT UNTIL YOUR TEMPER COOLS DOWN!



A PACKAGE FER--WH... YOU'RE THE SAME FELLOW WHO GAVE IT TO ME!

123
SO WHAT? IS THERE A LAW AGAINST IT? GIVE IT TO ME!



WELL, I'LL BE A--!

I SMELL THE STRONG SCENT OF SOMETHING FISHY HERE!



I'M GOING TO FIND OUT WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT!

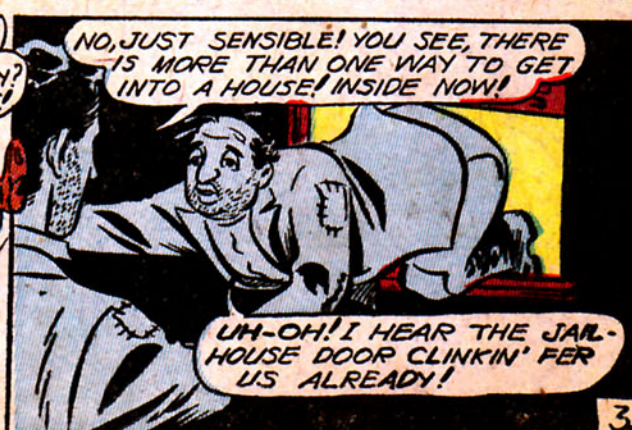
AW PLEASE, DRIFTY! DON'T STICK YER NOSE INTO TROUBLE AN' I'LL SPEAK T' YA!

PU-LEEZ! LET'S GO!



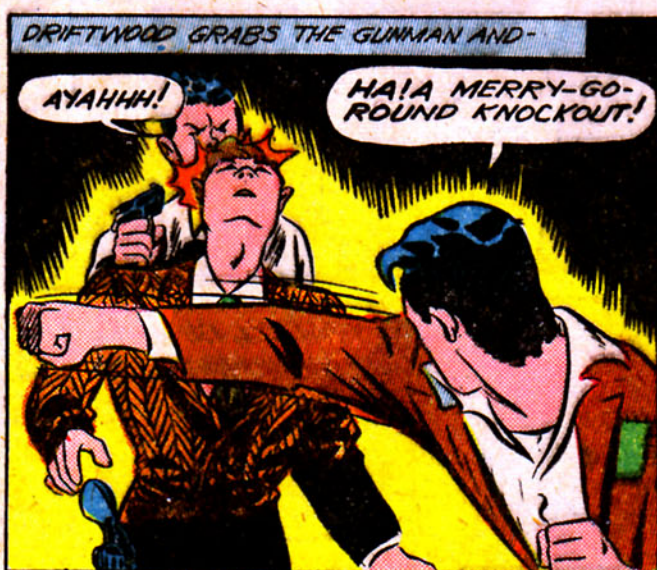
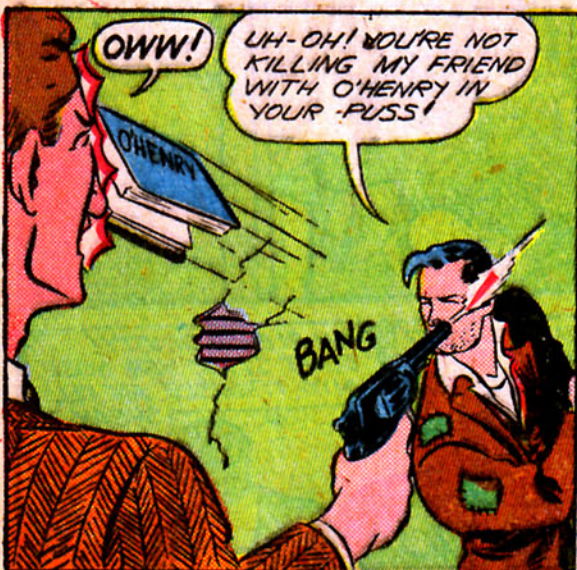
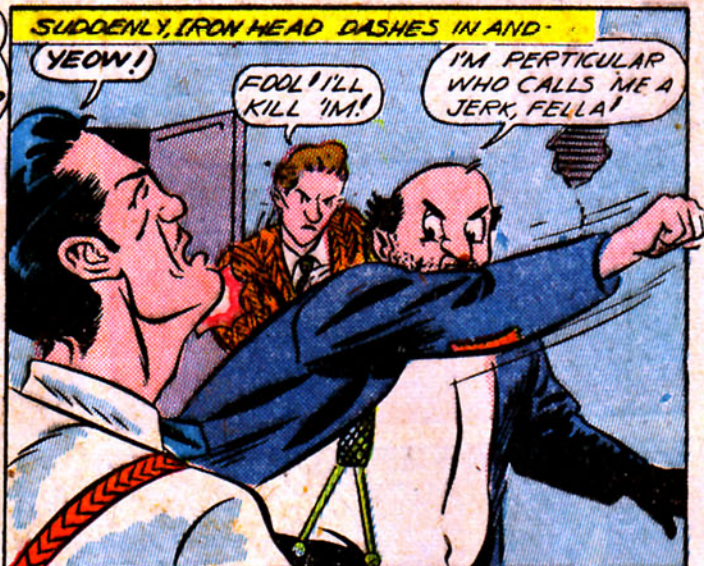
NO, MY FRIEND! WITHOUT QUESTION, SOMETHING IS AT FAULT HERE! IT IS OUR DUTY TO FIND OUT JUST WHAT!

HERE? IN THE ALLEYWAY? YER NUTS!

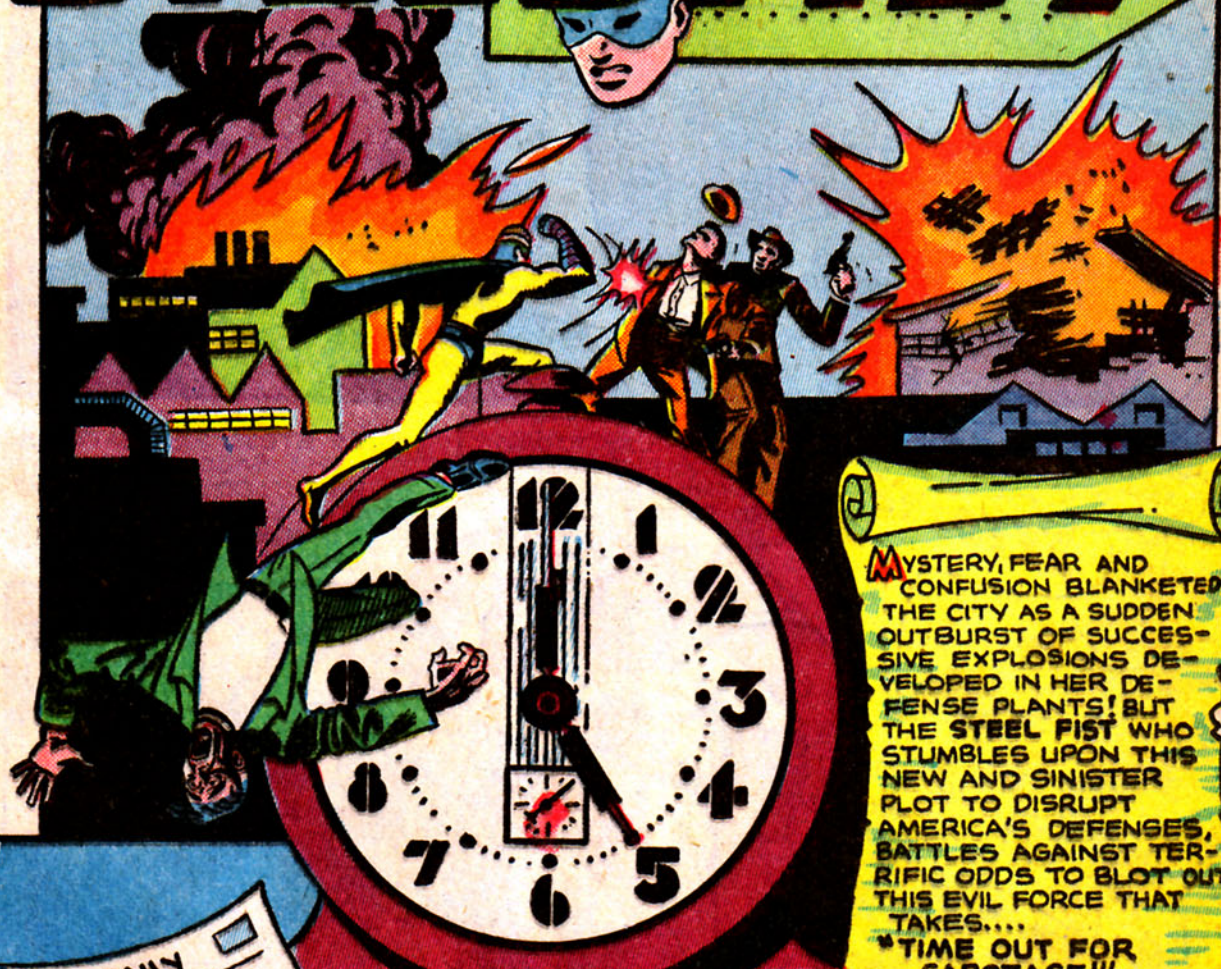


NO, JUST SENSIBLE! YOU SEE, THERE IS MORE THAN ONE WAY TO GET INTO A HOUSE! INSIDE NOW!

UH-OH! I HEAR THE JAIL-HOUSE DOOR CLINKIN' FER US ALREADY!



STEEL FIST



MYSTERY, FEAR AND CONFUSION BLANKETED THE CITY AS A SUDDEN OUTBURST OF SUCCESSIVE EXPLOSIONS DEVELOPED IN HER DEFENSE PLANTS! BUT THE STEEL FIST WHO STUMBLES UPON THIS NEW AND SINISTER PLOT TO DISRUPT AMERICA'S DEFENSES, BATTLES AGAINST TERRIFIC ODDS TO BLOT OUT THIS EVIL FORCE THAT TAKES....

"TIME OUT FOR SABOTAGE!"

ONE MORNING, AS TIMOTHY SLADE WALKS TO WORK....

THESE MYSTERIOUS EXPLOSIONS ARE SURE ADDING UP! YOU NEVER KNOW WHERE THEY'LL STRIKE NEXT!

SUDDENLY...

GOOD GOSH! ANOTHER WAR PLANT BLAST!!



DAILY
WAR PLANT
BLASTS SHOCK
CITY!!

DAILY
PLANT
EXPLOSIONS
CONTINUE!

DAILY
F.B.I. FEARS
SABOTAGE!

WHA! WHERE'D THOSE
THREE MEN COME FROM?
I THINK I'D BETTER IN-
VESTIGATE 'EM AS THE
STEEL FIST!

QUICK! LET US
MAKE HASTE!...
HIMMEL! THE
STEEL FIST!

SO YOU'RE
THE RATZIS,
EH?

WE HAFF BEEN
DISCOVERED!



HERE'S SOMETHING I'M
SURE YOU'LL NEVER
FORGET!

YEEOW!!

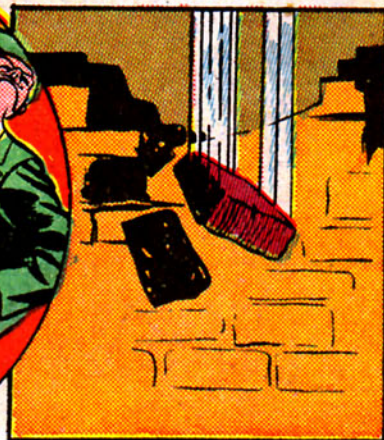


NO GUN PLAY TODAY,
CHUM!... BUT KEEP
YOUR CHIN UP JUST
THE SAME!

UGHH!



AS STEEL FIST BATTLES
THE SABOTEURS, A
BRICK, LOOSENED FROM
THE EXPLOSION, SUD-
DENLY BEGINS TO
HURTLE BELOW...



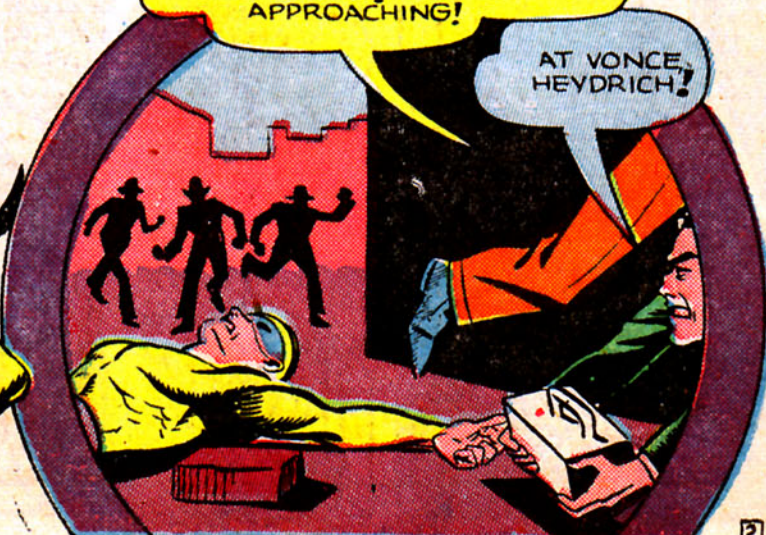
... FINDING IT'S MARK UPON
THE STEEL FIST'S HEAD!

OOOOOH!



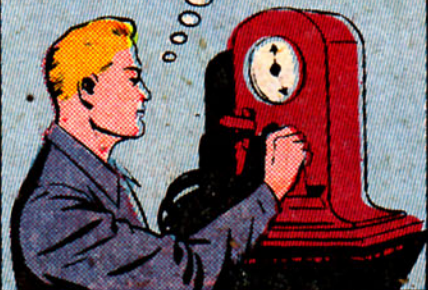
HURRY! GATHER UP YOUR
TOOL BOXES! A CROWD IS
APPROACHING!

AT VONCE,
HEYDRICH!



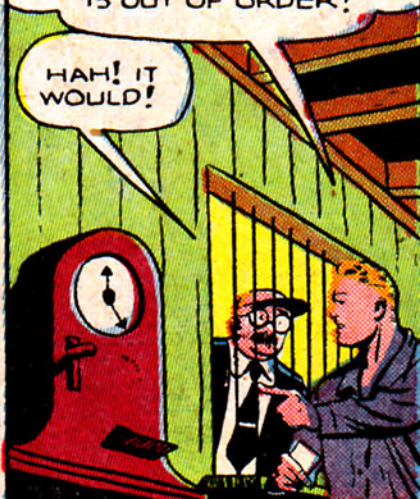
LATER THAT DAY, TIMOTHY SLADE FINISHING HIS SHIFT, CHECKS OUT...

I'D SURE LIKE TO GET MY HANDS ON THOSE SABOTEURS! IT WAS A LUCKY BREAK FOR THEM WHEN THAT LOOSE BRICK FELL ME!



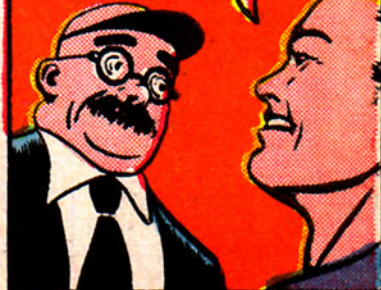
OH, OH! THE TIME DIDN'T REGISTER ON MY CARD! HEY, JOE! THIS TIME-CLOCK IS OUT OF ORDER!

HAH! IT WOULD!



COULD YA' ANKLE ON DOWN TO THE AJAX WATCH REPAIRERS ON REGENCY STREET, TIM AND LET EM KNOW ABOUT IT?

SURE THING, JOE! IT'S ON MY WAY HOME, ANYWAYS!



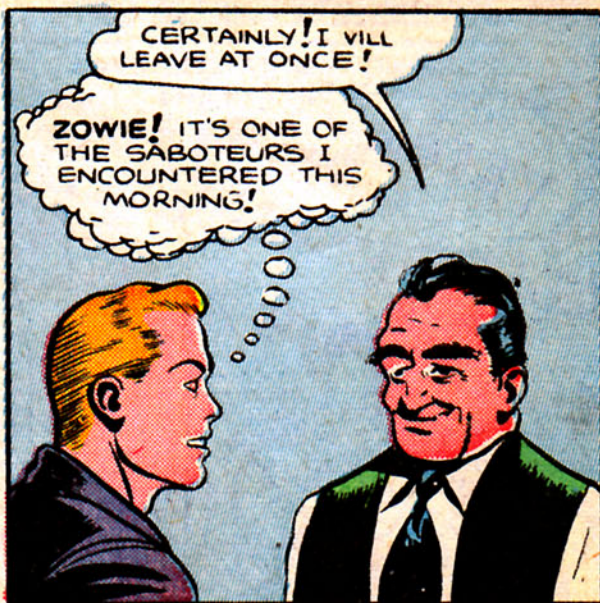
MINUTES LATER, AT THE AJAX WATCH REPAIRERS...

SAY, BUD! THERE'S A TIME-CLOCK THAT'S OUT OF ORDER AT THE WAR PLANT! CAN YOU HOP ON DOWN?



CERTAINLY! I WILL LEAVE AT ONCE!

ZOWIE! IT'S ONE OF THE SABOTEURS I ENCOUNTERED THIS MORNING!



ONCE OUTSIDE, TIMOTHY SLADE MAKES A QUICK CHANGE! *THE STEEL FIST!*

LOOKS LIKE THIS BUSINESS CALL HAS TURNED INTO A SOCIAL CALL!



HI, RAT! TIME YOURSELF BECAUSE I'M GOING TO SET YOU STRAIGHT!

HUH!? YIPE! THE STEEL FIST!!



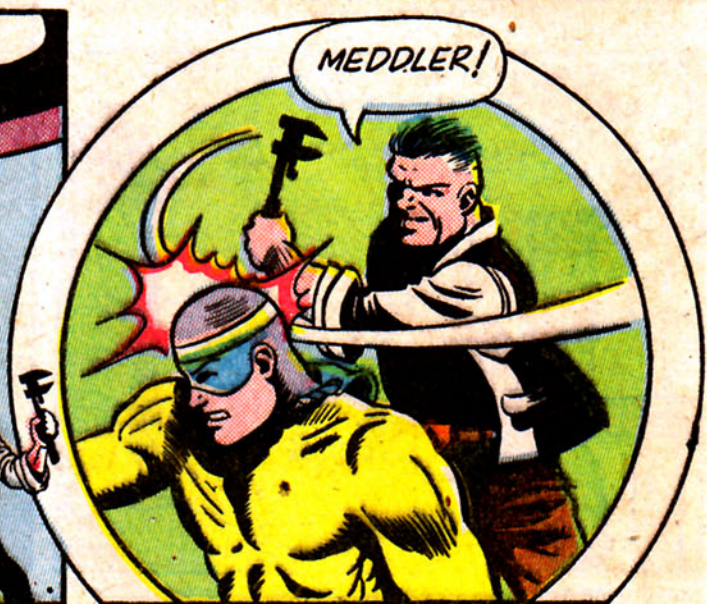
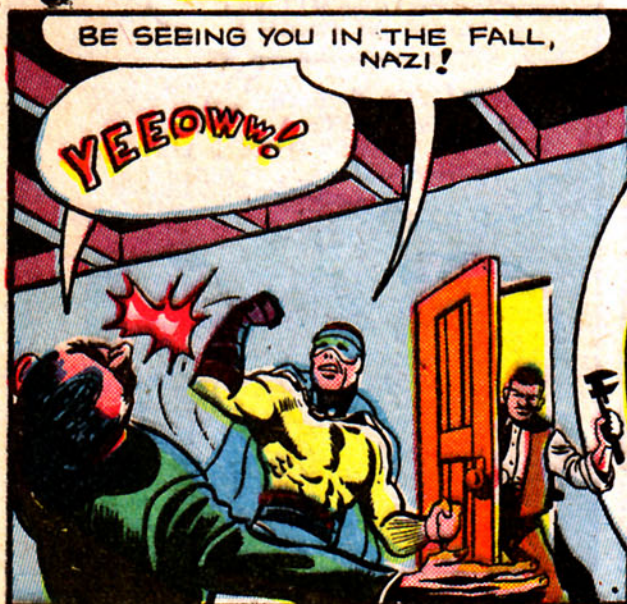
MEANWHILE, IN THE BACK ROOM...



GULP! ACH DU LIEBER!



HEYDRICH! THE-THE-GULP! THE STEEL FIST!



LATER, WHEN STEEL FIST AWAKES...



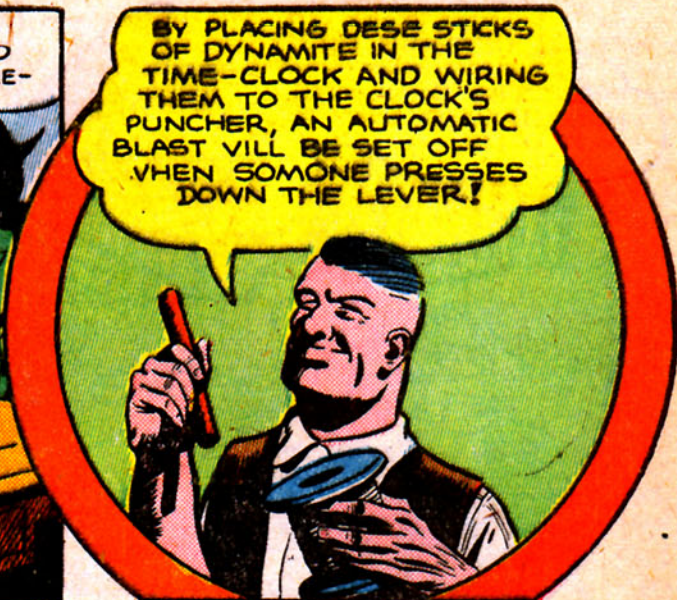
HAVING SUCH A NOTED GUEST, IT VILL BE A PLEASURE TO EXPLAIN HOW I VILL SABOTAGE THIS PLANT! IT REALLY ISS AN INGENIOUS PLAN, BELIEVE ME!



TIME CLOCKS, ONE TIME OR OTHER, BREAK DOWN AND VE, SPECIALIZING IN WATCH REPAIRING, ARE ASKED TO FIX DEM!



BY PLACING DESE STICKS OF DYNAMITE IN THE TIME-CLOCK AND WIRING THEM TO THE CLOCK'S PUNCHER, AN AUTOMATIC BLAST VILL BE SET OFF WHEN SOMONE PRESSES DOWN THE LEVER!



WE KNOW DOT ALL ARE SEARCHED BEFORE YOU CAN ENTER THE PLANT!... SO VE HAVE PREPARED OURSELVES FOR THIS ON ALL OUR JOBS! NOTICE THE NARROW GROOVES MADE IN THE HANDLES OF THESE TOOLS!



I PUT THE DYNAMITE STICKS IN THE GROOVES AND RETURN THE BOTTOMS TO THE TOOL HANDLES! NOW, NO ONE IS THE WISER AND THAT — HAW, HAW!... INCLUDES THE PLANT GUARD!

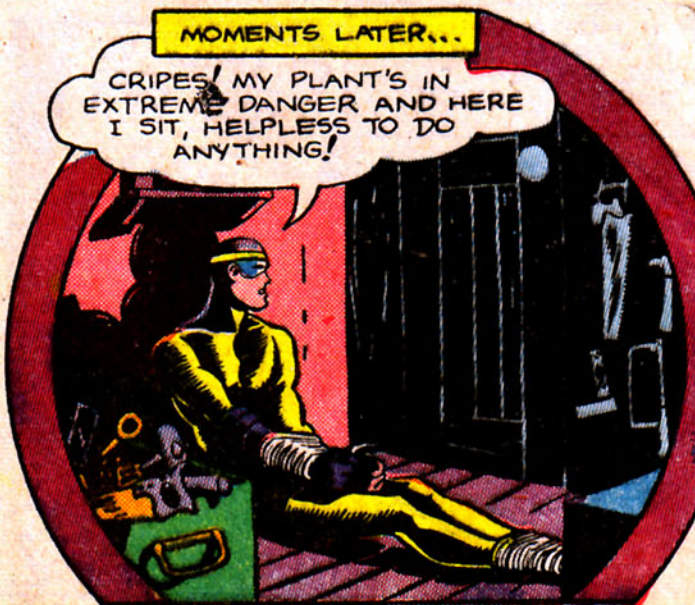


AND NOW VE MUST GO! PUT THE NECESSARY MATERIALS IN THE TOOL BOX AND HIDE THE STEEL FIST IN DOT CLOSET! HEH, HEH! ANOTHER VOR PLANT VILL SOON BE DESTROYED!



MOMENTS LATER...

CRIPES! MY PLANT'S IN EXTREME DANGER AND HERE I SIT, HELPLESS TO DO ANYTHING!



HMM-M! I SEEM TO BE IN A TOOL BIN! WONDER IF THEY HAVE ANY FILES IN STOCK?



MEANWHILE, AT THE
DEFENSE PLANT....

VELL, THE DYNAMITE
IS INSTALLED! NOW TO
WAIT UNTIL...

HEYDRICH!
LOOK!



HOWDY, BOYS! LEAVING
SO SOON?

YEOWTCH!

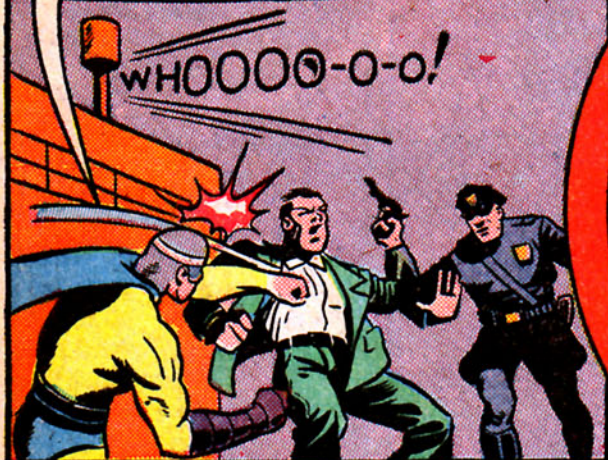
HIMMEL! HOW
DID HE GET
FREE?

OOOE!



THAT'S EASY, CHUMP!
NEVER THROW A GUY
INTO A TOOL BIN WITH
FILES LAYING ABOUT!

WHOOOOO-O-O!



GREAT SCOTT! THE
FIVE O'CLOCK WHISTLE
HAS BLOWN! THEY'LL
BE PUNCHING THE
TIME-CLOCK ANY
MOMENT NOW!

GUARD!
KEEP AN
EYE ON
THESE BIRDS!
I'LL EXPLAIN
LATER!

RIGHTO!



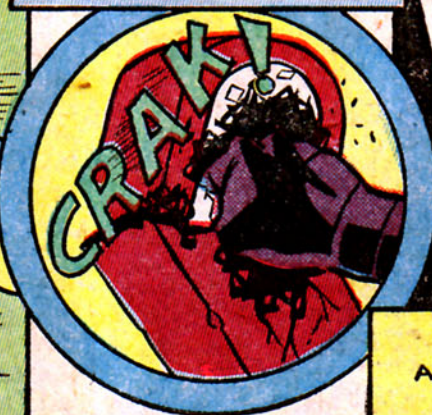
QUICKLY, STEEL FIST
RACES INTO THE PLANT

OH, OH! THAT FIRST GUY
IS ABOUT TO PUNCH THE
CLOCK! I MUST STOP
HIM OR IT'LL BE CURTAINS
FOR US ALL!



WITH NOT A SECOND
TO SPARE, THE
STEEL FIST HALTS
SURE DISASTER!

CRACK!



DAILY
**STEEL FIST
TRAPS
SABOTEURS!!**

SAVES PLANT
FROM CERTAIN
DESTRUCTION

STEEL FIST
APPEARS IN EVERY
ISSUE OF
**BLUE CIRCLE
COMICS!**

SALT OF THE EARTH

DUKE knew that Jim was not asleep. No one could sleep in a jostling, bouncy Army jeep plowing over the barren flats of central Italy. So Duke Cameron punched his elbow into Jim Walker's ribs.

Jim Walker's sagging body slumped over on the seat beside Duke. Duke's eyes bulged in surprise. For his buddy was dead to the world. His eyes were closed and an ugly bump showed bruised and bleeding on his right temple. Duke was amazed. He had heard no shot. No Nazi was within ten miles of the American position.

A gun was jammed hard into his back and a gruff voice barked at him, "You will not stop! I am going through the mine fields with you to report to General Hofer about your American plans for attack. It pleases me to use an American dog for a chauffeur. But I do not trust your Major's crazy invention to explode our mines. It is nothing but a triangular boom swung out in front of this jeep. It drags on the ground forty feet ahead of you and is supposed to trip off any mine it hits. But I do not trust it. I know the safe path through your mine fields and I will tell you how to drive to get through safely."

Duke stalled for time to figure a way out of his predicament. "Who are you? How'd you get here?"

* * * *

THE German laughed. "I am Ober-Lieutenant Heinz. I stole a uniform from a dead American and I have spent the last two weeks inside your lines. Your dumkopf officers did not suspect me because I talk good English, and I discovered all the plans of your Major Slocum. I know that an attack is planned on General Hofer's lines by you American swine. I know that you and your friend were supposed to pick a safe path through our mines, using the silly invention of Major Slocum on this jeep. Then you were supposed to return and lead the American forces through the mine fields in an attack on General Hofer."

Duke was perturbed. He wondered if the German knew how accurately he had explained

the Major's plans. He wondered if the German knew ALL the details of the plans. "You have a good imagination, Heinie."

Heinz laughed. "I know all details. How else would I know where to intercept, you and your friend? Who do you suppose dragged that rotten tree across the road at Minano Pass that leads into the plain? So you would have to get out and clear the road and give me time to jump out from my hiding place, slug your comrade, and hide in the back of the jeep?" He chuckled throatily. "I know all details."

Heinz chuckled softly. "There will be no American attack. Not by your troops. For we will go through the mine fields and warn General Hofer. Our field guns will then pound the path through the mine fields and your following forces will be shattered. Then we will counter-attack."

Duke's eyes roved over the rough terrain before him. The jeep bounced and slid and leaped in the heavy going. He was waiting for a chance to turn the tables on this cock-sure Nazi. He had to. He must. Or Major Slocum and the American troops would be rushing after him right into a German trap.

The German shouted suddenly at the top of his voice: "Turn here, dumkopf! The path through the mine fields turns here."

Duke twisted the steering wheel sharply. The rake-like boom sticking out in front of the jeep described an arcing sweep across the earth. Bumped softly against an obstruction. There was a booming explosion to their left as the mine-finder tripped a mine and a crater of earth and rock erupted like an exploding mushroom. Debris showered over them as the jeep bounced forward on its wild trail.

THE German jammed his gun against Duke's back. "You will follow my orders. Turn when I tell you or we will both be killed."

Duke was still trying for an opening to escape from his predicament. "Then take that gun out of my back. How can I obey orders with that Luger pressing a hole in my backbone?"

The German grunted. But he braced himself with both hands on the back of the jeep's front seat, the Luger clasped in the fingers of his right hand.

He glanced at his watch. He knew the Major and the troops were now at Minano Pass. They would be starting to follow the path he had laid through the mine fields. He moaned inwardly. The moment that Heinz reached General Hofer, the German artillery would start to blast the path through the mine fields and the Yanks would advance to certain annihilation. He

paled at the thought. His hands gripped the wheel. His teeth clenched.

The German bellowed, "Turn left!" Duke twisted the wheel sharply. The jeep squirmed around on two wheels. But the German was solidly braced against the seat. The Luger did not move at all.

Jim Walker suddenly stirred beside Duke. He moaned softly. He tried to sit up, weakly. His hand went to his temple and he moaned in pain as his hand touched the swelling lump on his head. He turned wild and pain-wracked eyes to his buddy. "What happened?"

Duke motioned at Heinz. "The Nazi rapped you on the dome with his gun back at Minano Pass."

The Nazi barked, "I will rap you again if you try any funny business. Ve are only vun mile from Hofer's headquarters now."

Duke braced his feet against the floor-boards. Relaxed his left hand on the steering wheel of the jeep. He kept his eyes on the ugly Luger near his right shoulder. The jeep bounced and jolted over a little rise in the rolling earth. He chose that moment for desperate action.

* * * *

HE TWISTED the jeep to the right with all the surging power in his arms. The jeep quivered and chattered at the sharp turn. The front wheels churned bitingly into the soft earth. The momentum and the quick, unexpected turn threw the Nazi off balance. At the same fraction of a second, Duke twisted around and slammed his left fist down hard on the German's extended wrist.

The Nazi bellowed with pain at the smashing blow. The gun fell out of his hand and fell on the floor-boards of the jeep. Heinz howled in guttural rage and tried to encircle Duke with his long arms. But Duke kicked the ignition key with his foot. Then he squirmed from behind the wheel and leaped into the back of the jeep. The Nazi slugged at him fiercely but Duke parried the blow with an out-thrust arm. Then he bore in with both fists flying. He burned his left in the Nazi's stomach. The Nazi doubled over, gasping for breath.

Duke straightened him up with a left on the nose and then followed through with a terrific right on the chin that knocked Heinz clear out of the jeep on to the ground, limp as a rag.

Jim Walker was now sitting up, blood on his face. But he had his own gun out now and he had the fallen Nazi covered. He grinned triumphantly at Duke. "Come on, pal, tie the buzzard up, and we'll cart him back to see Major Slocum."

Duke hurried to tie up the Nazi with his own belt. He heaved the inert body into the front seat and Jim Walker held him erect with one hand and shoved his gun into the German's ribs with the other. Duke jumped in front of the jeep and unfastened the two bolts that held the mine-finder. Then kicked the attachment off into the brush. He leaped into the jeep and started it.

Jim Walker pointed excitedly to the north. "We must have been nearly in the German lines. Here comes a German scout car"

A German car was rushing headlong toward them, a machine gun spitting wickedly. Bullets kicked up the earth all around the jeep. Duke gave the jeep a shot of gas, turned her on a dime, and set sail, full speed, for the American lines, ten miles away.

Ober-Lieutenant Heinz moaned and sat up as well as his bonds would permit. The German scout car was falling farther behind and the German knew that his doom was sealed. The jeep was running like a scared rabbit. Duke twisted and turned the jeep in tortuous maneuvers and kept it racing crazily in the general direction of the American lines.

Heinz was sobbing frantically. "Stop! You fool! You vill hit vun off our mines und kill us all. Stop und I vill tell you the way through the mine fieldts."

DUKE laughed. "What do you care how you die? You might as well die by a mine. You're headed for a firing squad, anyway"

Heinz sobbed like a child. "Your luck can't hold out. I don't want to die! You'll hit a mine."

Jim Walker shouted and pointed ahead. "Here come the Major and the detachment." Duke followed his pointing finger and saw the long, dark, thin line of American scout cars and tanks and trucks and light guns moving forward toward Hofer's lines. In a moment they had joined forces.

They turned Ober-Lieutenant Heinz over to a group that took him back to the base. They explained their adventure to Major Slocum. "Heinz thought we were risking our necks coming back through the mine fields."

Major Slocum grinned. "That was a pretty slick trick of yours, Duke. Slings a big barrel of salt under your jeep, with a tiny hole in the can so the salt would trickle out. After you left Minano Pass you left a trail as plain as day. All we had to do was follow that trail of salt."

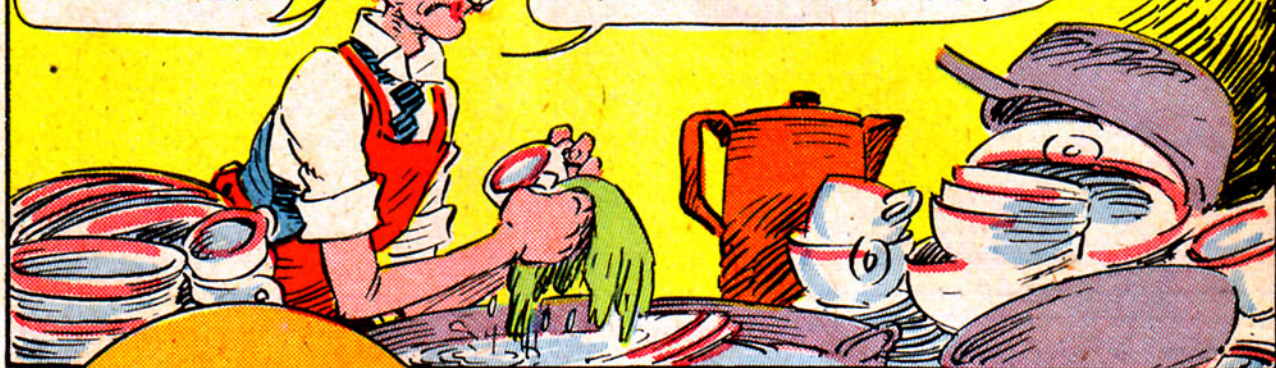
Duke smiled. "Salt of the earth," is the name for it."

THE END

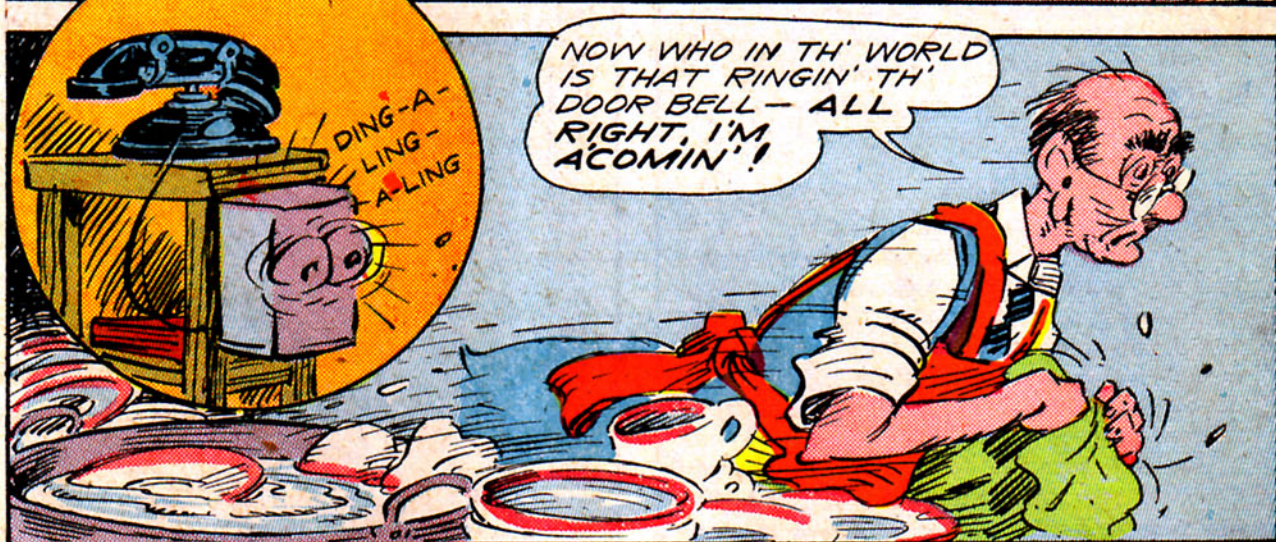
SLAPHAPPY GRANDPAPPY

DAG-NABIT!
A WOMAN'S
PLACE IS IN
TH' KITCHEN!

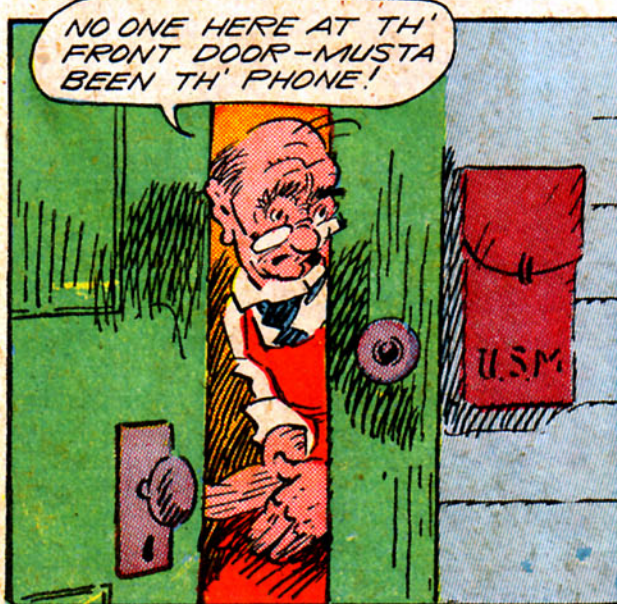
AND THAT DAUGHTER OF
MINE GOES OFF TO WORK IN A
FACTORY! WHEN SHE OUGHTA
BE HOME WASHIN' DISHES
AND MINDIN' HER KIDS!



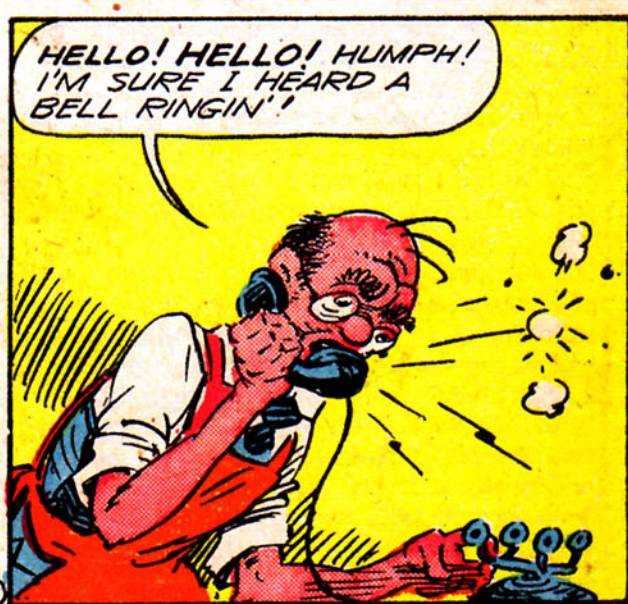
NOW WHO IN TH' WORLD
IS THAT RINGIN' TH'
DOOR BELL - ALL
RIGHT, I'M
ACOMIN'!



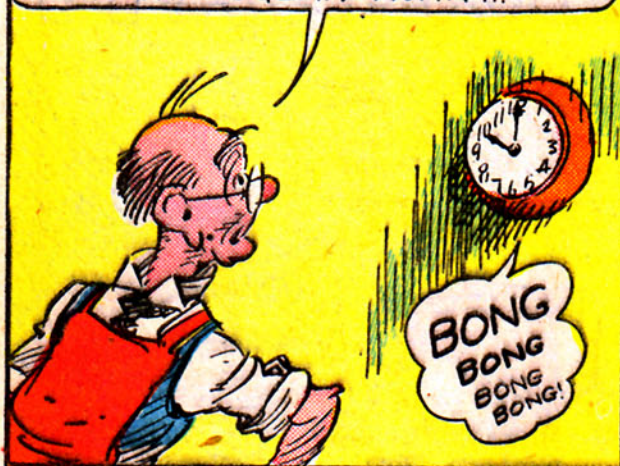
NO ONE HERE AT TH'
FRONT DOOR-MUSTA
BEEN TH' PHONE!



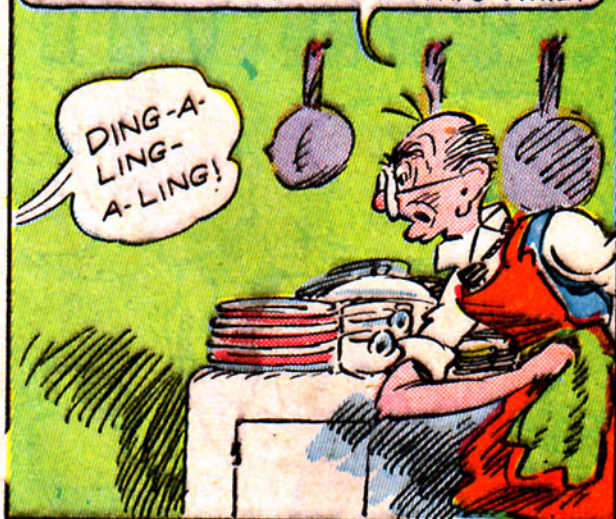
HELLO! HELLO! HUMPH!
I'M SURE I HEARD A
BELL RINGIN'!



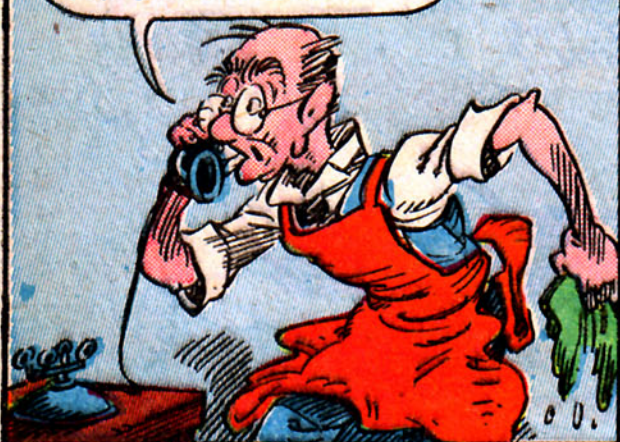
THIS CHASIN' RINGIN' BELLS PUTS
ME BEHIND IN MY HOUSE WORK!
WELL, BACK TO DOIN' TH' DISHES!
DERN THIS SQUAW-WORK !!!



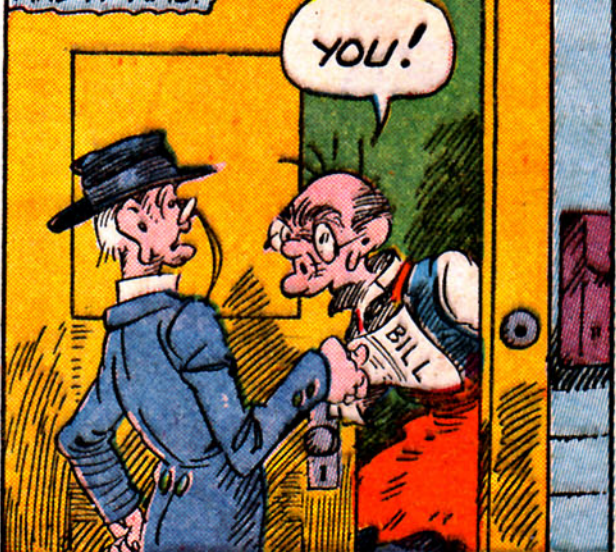
THERE GOES THAT BELL AGAIN!
IT MUST BE TH' PHONE TH' TIME!



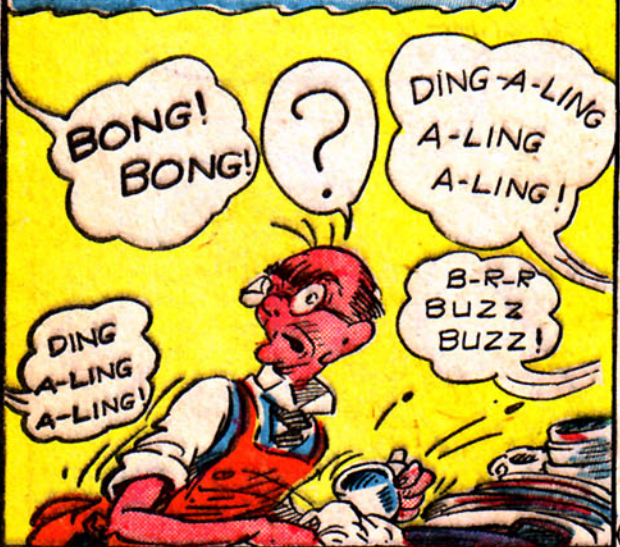
HELLO-HELLO! DRAT
THAT PHONE, I'D TEAR
TH' PESKY THING OUT
BUT-- MAYBE IT WAS
TH' DOOR BELL!



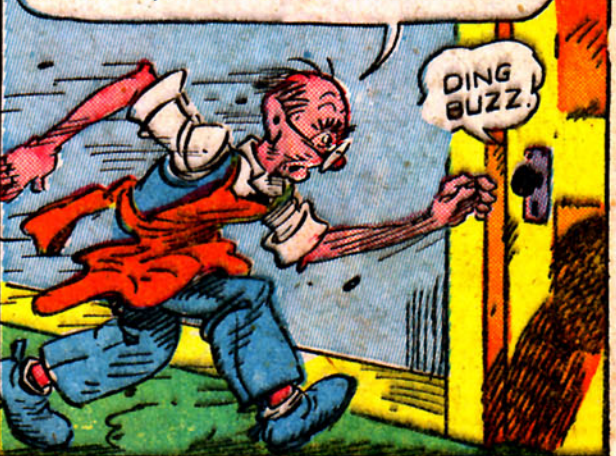
AND IT WAS!



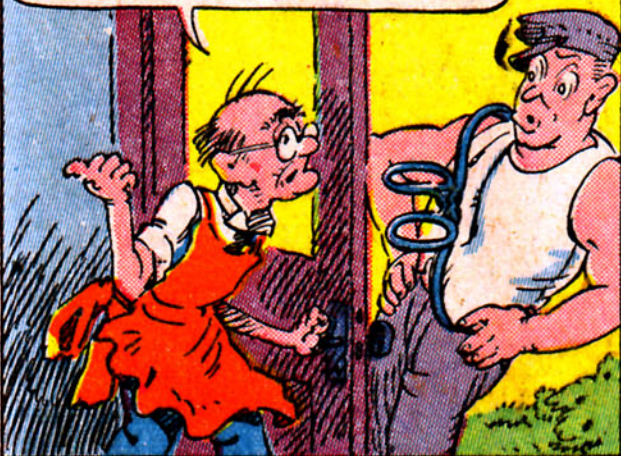
LATER-BACK AT THE DISH PAN



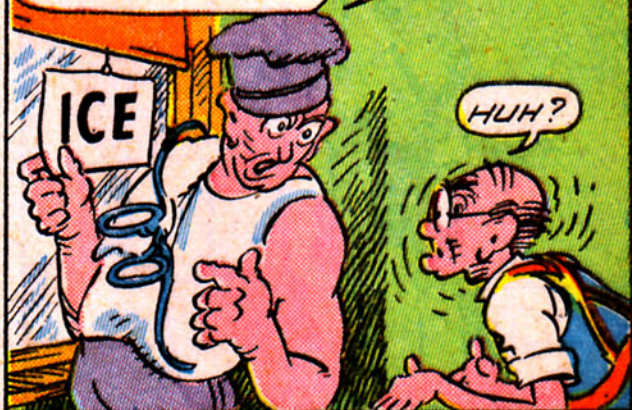
IT AIN'T TH' PHONE, NOR TH'
FRONT DOOR, NOR TH' SIDE DOOR!
I'LL TRY TH' BACK DOOR! ALL
RIGHT... ALL RIGHT, HOLD YOUR
HOSSES, I'M ACOMIN'!



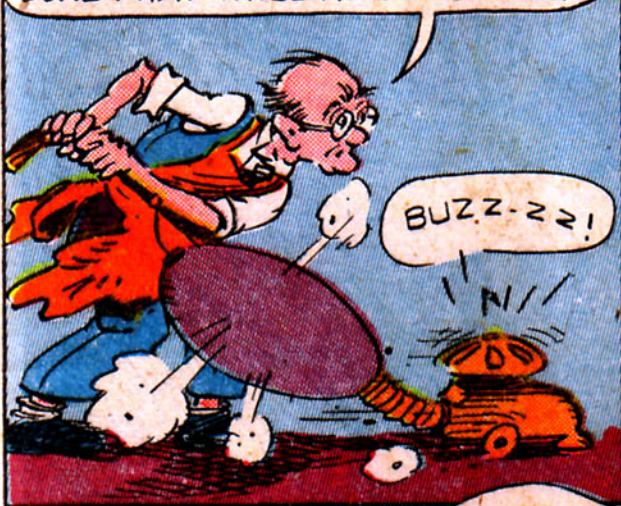
DO I WANT ICE, YOU SAY? **YES**, YOU THICK HEADED APE! CAN'T YOU SEE TH' CARD HANGIN' THERE IN TH' WINDOW WHAT SAYS I-C-E, 'ICE?'



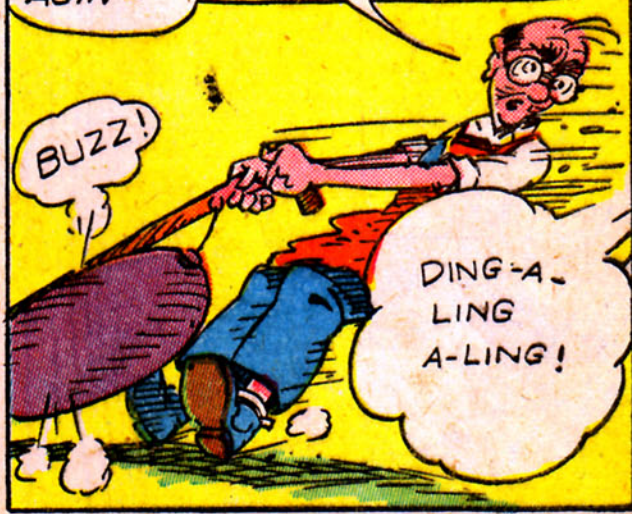
LISTEN, YOU OLD DRIED UP COOT! YOU'VE TURNED THIS CARD ON THE WRONG SIDE! DID YOU THINK I WAS GOING TO CLIMB INTO THE HOUSE TO READ IT? YOU'RE NUTS!



IT MUST BE NEAR LUNCH TIME AN' I AIN'T GOT MY HOUSE WORK DONE! DRAT THOSE RINGIN' BELLS!



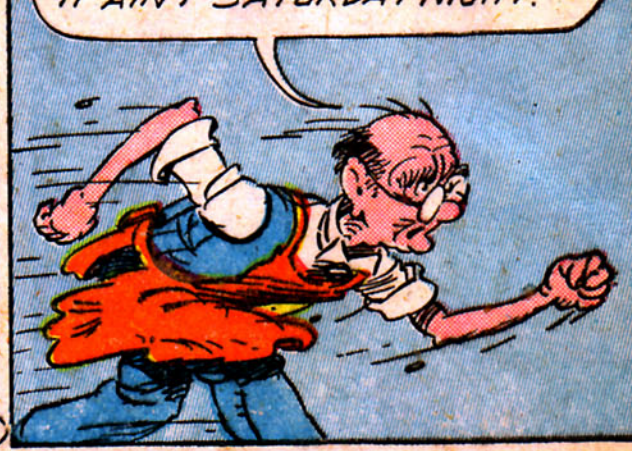
DING BUST IT! THERE GOES THAT DING DONG BLASTED DOOR BELL AGIN'!

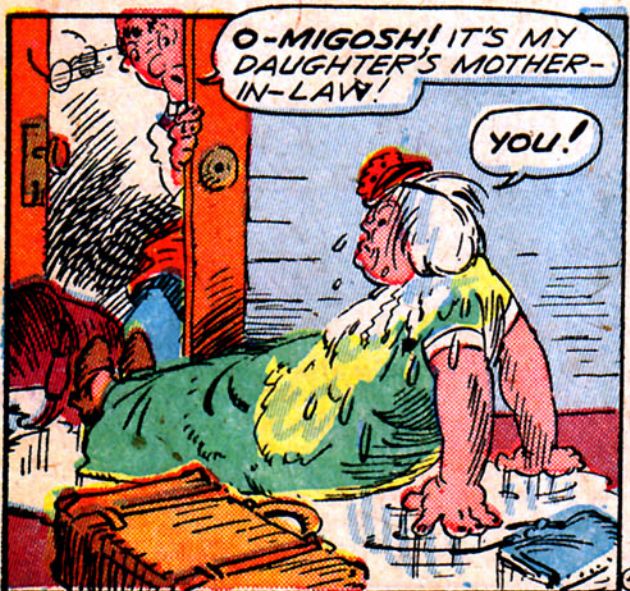
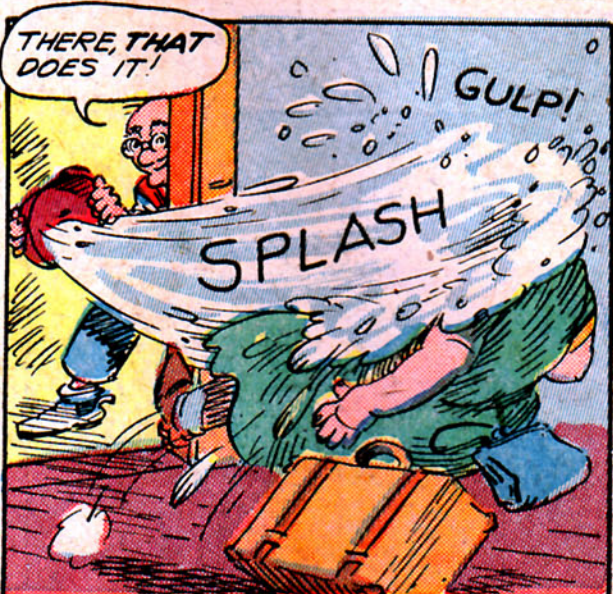
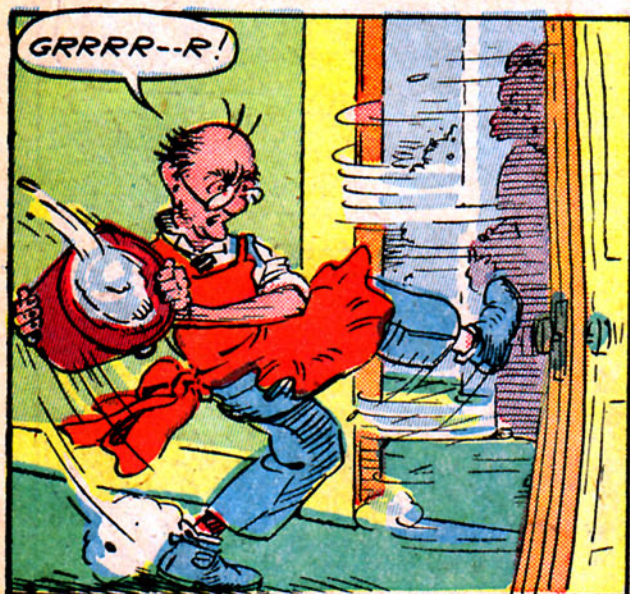
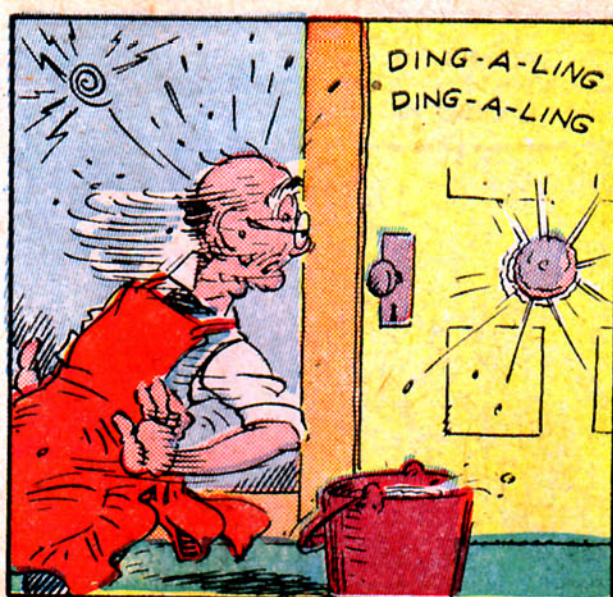
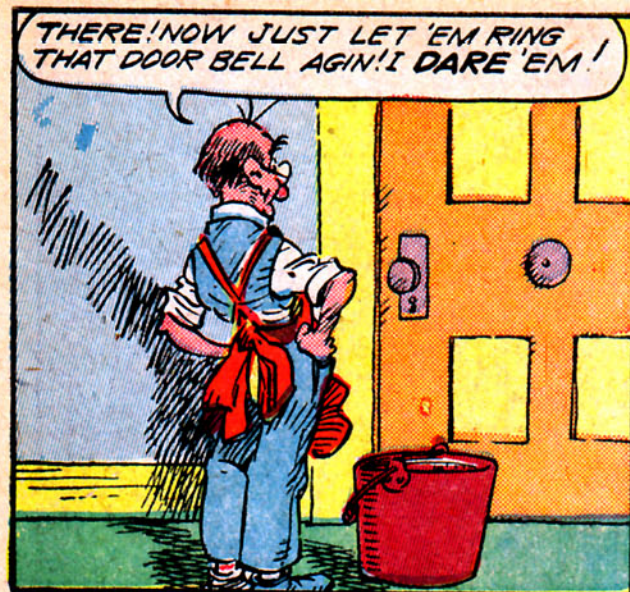


I'M WORKING MY WAY THROUGH COLLEGE BY SELLING MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTIONS!



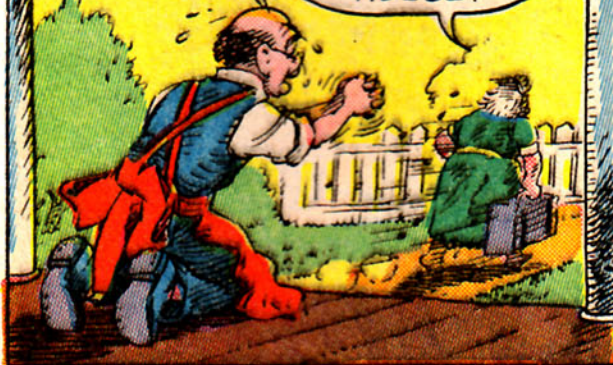
THAT'S ALL I CAN STAND! THAT'S TH' LAST STRAW! I'M GONNA GIT A BUCKET OF WATER A.N' TH' NEXT PERSON THAT RINGS THAT BELL IS GONNA GIT A BATH, EVEN IF IT AIN'T SATURDAY NIGHT!



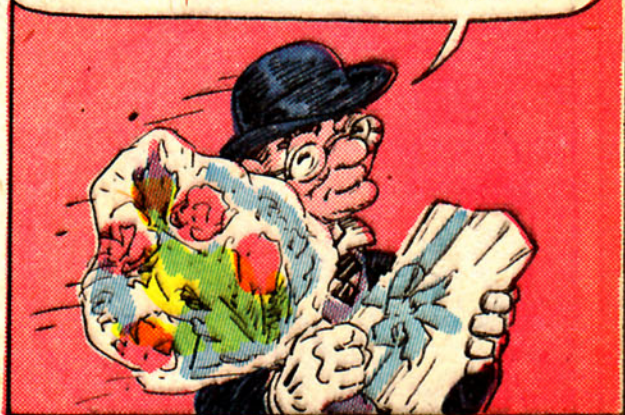


AW, PLEASE DON'T GO! YOU'VE NO IDEA TH' TERRIBLE STRAIN I'VE BEEN UNDER! PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE COME BACK!

NO, SIR-EE! NOT AS LONG AS YOU ARE IN THAT HOUSE!



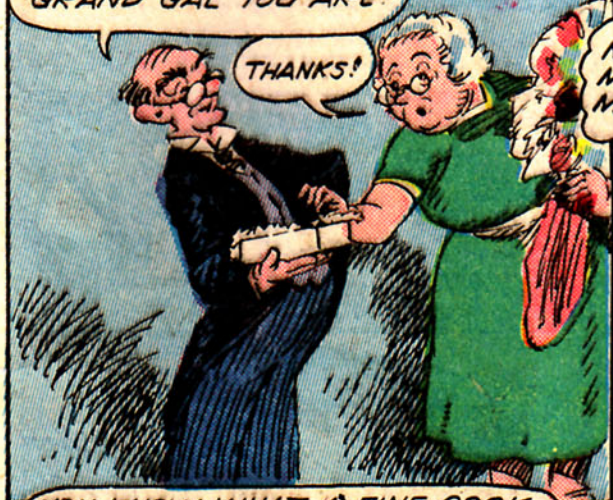
SHE'S GONE TO TH' HOTEL FOR TH' NIGHT. I'LL GO TAKE HER FLOWERS, AN' CANDY! THAT ALWAYS GITS TH' OLD GALS AND DAG-NABIT, I'M NOT A BAD LOOKIN' OLD HE-GOAT, EVEN IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF--AHM!



SARY, I SURE DO APOLOGIZE! I WAS THINKE' AS I DROVE UP WHAT A GRAND GAL YOU ARE!

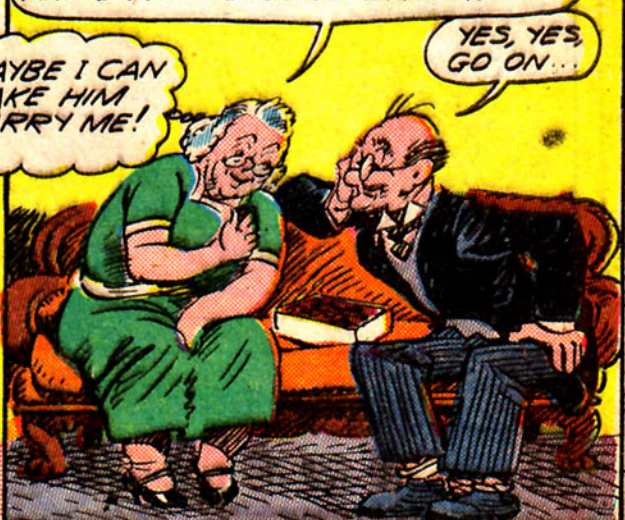
THANKS!

MAYBE I CAN MAKE HIM MARRY ME!



YOU'RE NOT A BAD BOY YOURSELF AND I WOULD COME BACK IF --

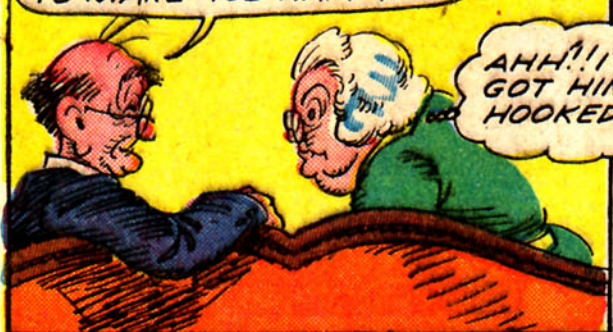
YES, YES, GO ON...



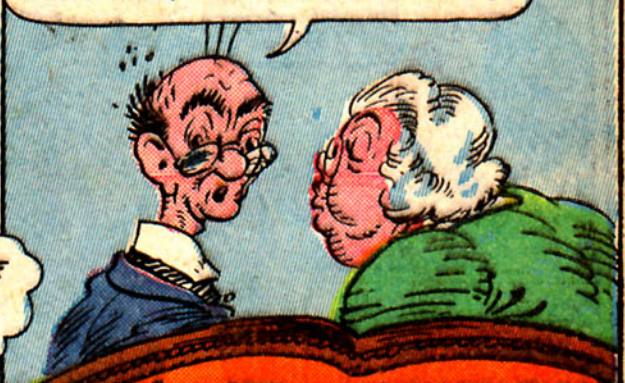
YOU KNOW WHAT A FINE COOK I AM AND I KEEP HOUSE JUST PERFECT-- DID YOU EVER THINK OF GETTING MARRIED AGAIN?

YOU AND I COULD BE SO HAPPY TOGETHER WITH OUR CHILDREN AND GRAND CHILDREN! I'D TRY MY BEST TO MAKE YOU HAPPY!

AHH!! I'VE GOT HIM HOOKED!

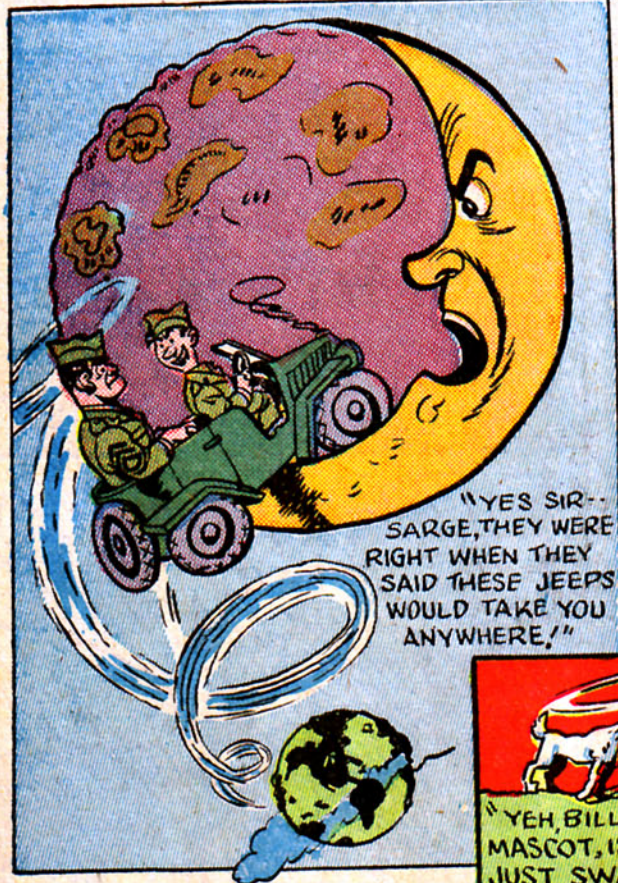


MI-GOSH, WHAT AM I SAYIN'?

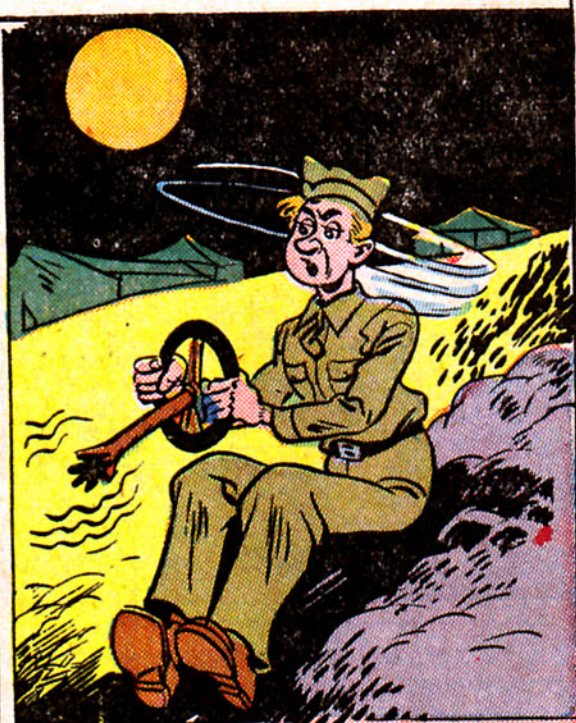


O-OH! LOOK OUT, GRANDPAPPY-WHAT YOU SAY MAY BE USED AGAINST YOU --- SEE SLAPHAPPY GRANDPAPPY IN NEXT MONTH'S BLUE CIRCLE COMICS!

'TENSHUN!



"YES SIR--
SARGE, THEY WERE
RIGHT WHEN THEY
SAID THESE JEEPS
WOULD TAKE YOU
ANYWHERE!"



"GOSH! I'VE EITHER LOST A JEEP--
OR FOUND A GOOD STEERING WHEEL!"

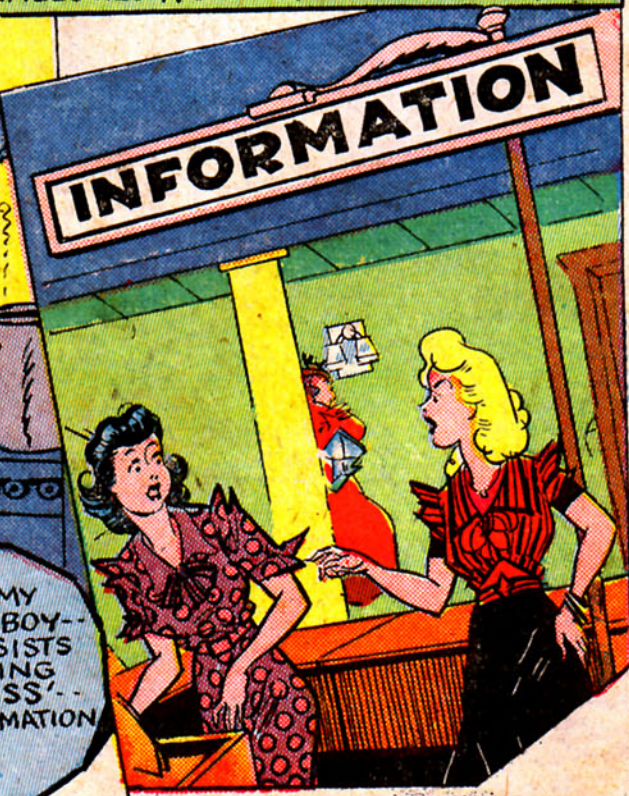


"YEH, BILLY GOAT--THE COMPANY
MASCOT, IS SURE STILL-- HE
JUST SWALLOWED A SPOON, AND CAN'T STIR!"



"NAW, IT DOESN'T
SEEM RIGHT
TO CALL MONEY
DOUGH--- FOR
DOUGH STICKS
TO YOUR
HANDS!"

"YES--MY
SOLDIER BOY--
FRIEND INSISTS
ON CALLING
ME 'MISS'--
MISS INFORMATION
!"





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 Color of Hair
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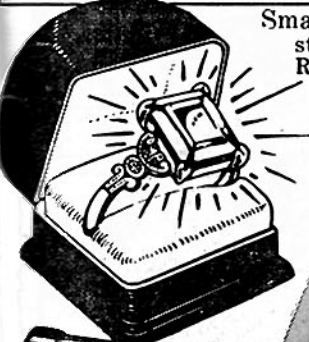
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 Address
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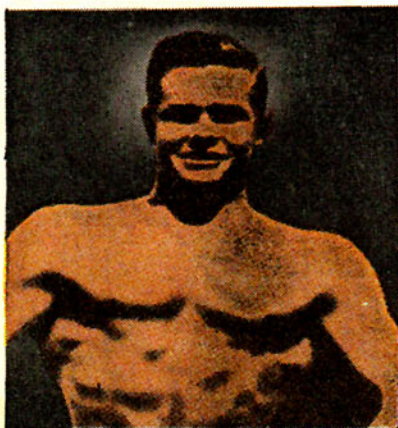
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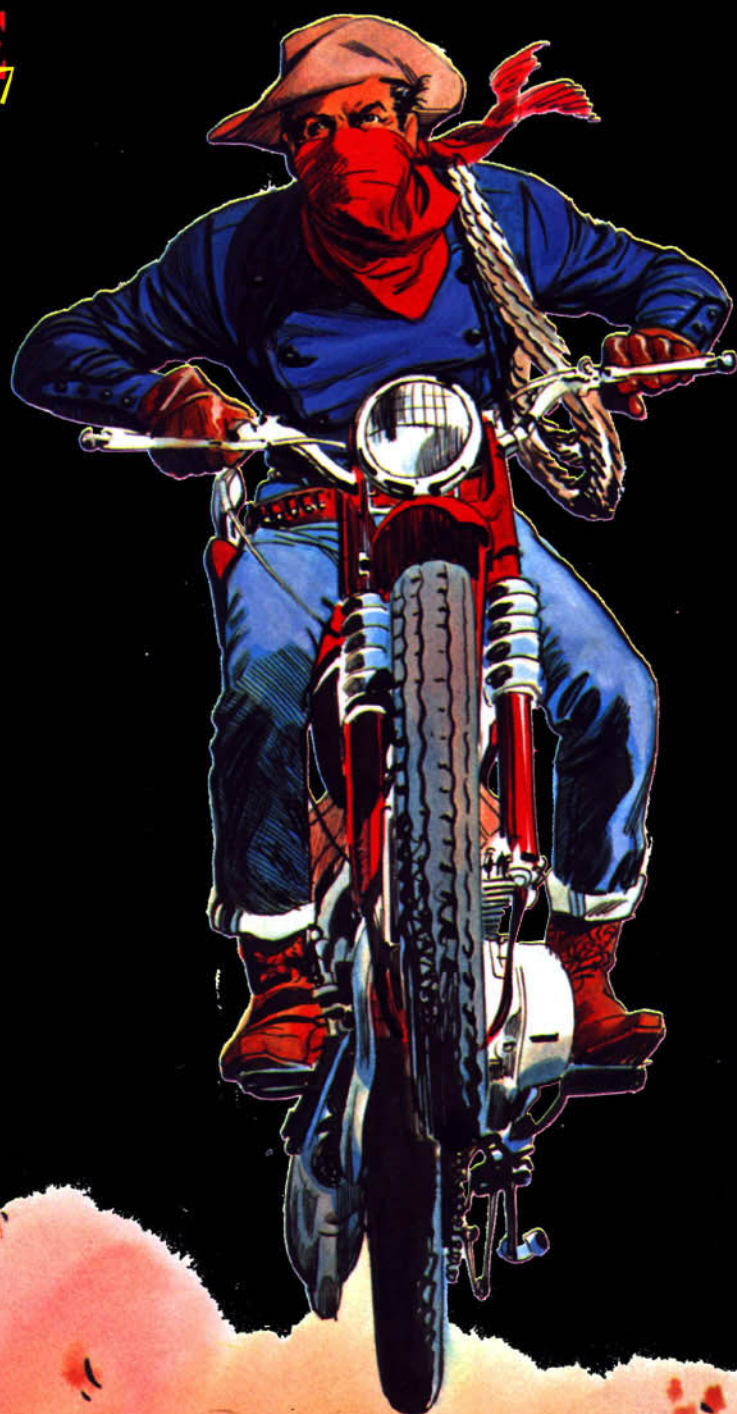


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